

Stranded Palestinians face a long way home

SALLOUM (AFP) — They all have rings under their eyes, the men are unshaven and the babies cry from fatigue.

The Palestinians expelled from Libya have only finished the first part of their voyage after arriving at the Egyptian border post of Salloom, along the Mediterranean Sea.

They will have to travel another thousand kilometres (600 miles) under police surveillance to reach Rafah, the access point to the Gaza Strip, or Nuweibeh on the Red Sea.

From there, they can travel to Aqaba and eventually to the West Bank. The voyage home to the Palestinian self-rule areas is a disjointed, grueling and uncertain one.

"We have spent a day and a night" to get past the Egyptian border, said Talal Awad, part of a group of 61 Palestinians who were eating breakfast at a restaurant in Sidi Barrani.

Mr. Talal, 32, was a nurse in the Libyan town of Al Marg, near Benghazi. But officials suspended his work contract and he left with his wife and three children. Mr. Talal says he has no idea what he will do in Gaza.

On the road that follows the coast, minibuses with suitcases strapped to their roofs head east. Mr. Talal looked at them a moment and smiled.

"To think I named my son Aed (return), to show my desire to return to my country," he said.

Libya appears to have launched Saturday a massive operation to expel the 30,000 Palestinian residents within its borders, setting up a large camp along the Egyptian border to house those who do not have valid travel documents.

More than 300 were trapped in the no man's land along the border, and another 500 were due on Tuesday, Egyptian border officials said.

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has ordered the expulsion of all Palestinians to show up what he says is the failure of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) self-rule accords to create a viable Palestinian homeland.

Egypt only allows the Palestinians to transit its territory. Border officials scrupulously examine their documents, denying entry to those who do not have valid



Four-year-old Palestinian Randa Samy gives a victory sign after her family got permission from Israel to return home through Egypt to the West Bank after being expelled from Libya (AFP photo)

Kurdish leaders hold talks in Tehran

TEHRAN (R) — The leader of two rival Iraqi Kurdish groups are holding talks in Tehran to solve their disputes, an Iranian official was quoted on Tuesday as saying.

The Kurdish leaders were in Iran to "bridge the existing gap between them on control of northern Iraq. They both want peace and stability," Ali Khorram, advisor to the Iranian Foreign Minister, was quoted by Iran News daily as saying.

Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) leader Massoud Barzani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) head Jalal Talabani started their talks on Saturday, Mr. Khorram said.

"The current negotiations have been arranged (by Iran) on the request of the two rival faction leaders," Mr. Khorram added.

The two groups failed to reach agreement in U.S.-brokered talks in Ireland last month on the demilitarisation of the city of Erbil, held by the PUK, and the collection of border oil levies, controlled by the KDP.

Iran was critical of U.S. mediation in the conflict, saying regional conflicts should be solved without outside interference.

The factions, with a history of rivalry going back to the 1960s, agreed to a ceasefire and exchange of prisoners at a first round of talks in Ireland in August.

Peres says peace and democracy are behind economic development

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, calling the Middle East peace process a "revolution," made an impassioned plea Monday for talks to move forward so all in the region could benefit economically from peace.

"We must not stop in the middle," Mr. Peres said, addressing the 50th annual debate of the U.N. General Assembly. "It cannot be, it cannot remain, a peace between leaders. It must become a peace for people."

The development of democracy and freedom is the engine that will raise living standards throughout the Middle East, he said, pointing to examples of Asian and Latin American nations who have instituted democratic reforms.

Mr. Peres was in the United States for last week's signing of an accord in Washington that expands Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank.

"Economic success has nothing to do with geographic location or the colour of your skin. Make the right choice," he told other world leaders.

"Poverty and oppression is homemade, not imposed by others. The choice is for every country to become free, prosperous and democratic," he added.

He chided Syria and Lebanon for the slow pace of their talks with Israel, and said peace discussion should occur "on all levels, embracing all issues," not just security concerns.

The minister painted his own government's policy as heroic and determined.

"There is strong opposition in our own country to what we are doing," he said, but "we decided to make a bold choice not to dominate another people."

Israeli hardliners and settlers on the West Bank have vowed to oust his government, but Mr. Peres dismissed their threats.

"Winning peace is more important in our eyes than to win an election. Why should you be elected if you don't use the mandate of the people to change history?" Mr. Peres said.

He noted the contributions of the United States to the peace process, but said Israel was determined to maintain its independence.

"For us, the United States is not an empire of power, we are not afraid of the United States. For us, the United States is an empire of peace. We need the United States," he said.

He praised tentative Japanese efforts to match its economic strength with world leadership and urged other wealthy countries, including Arab states, do more to contribute to peace.

Mr. Peres also praised the development of a Middle East regional bank, and expressed hope of new development arising from the Middle East and North Africa economic summit later this month in Amman, and a November conference in Barcelona, Spain, for the Mediterranean region.

Rabbani forces claim control of centre of northern region

KABUL (AFP) — Forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani have captured a strategic city in northern Jawzjan province, the Defence Ministry spokesman here claimed Tuesday.

"Sangcharak fell to our forces Monday. The whole district is now under state control," the ministry said.

No independent confirmation of the claim was available.

The district centre is linked by road to Sheberghan, the capital of Jawzjan province. United Nations peace envoy Mahmoud Mestiri was reportedly in Sheberghan Monday to negotiate a ceasefire between troops of Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and pro-Rabbani forces.

On Monday, a spokesman for Gen. Dostum in Pakistan, Silghatullah Zaki, ruled out a ceasefire with Mr. Rabbani until the president resigned.

In a written statement, the Defence Ministry here said its commander in Sangcharak, Abdul Rahim Ayobi, had reported the capture of "25 heavy weapons of different types, two tanks and several

ammunition depots."

The Defence Ministry claims that pro-Rabbani forces in Sangcharak are now linked by road with their allies in neighbouring Balkh and Samangan provinces, allowing the free passage of supplies and reinforcements.

The reported pro-Rabbani successes in northern Afghanistan follow a string of defeats in the west, where the provinces of Herat, Farah and Nimroz recently fell to the Taliban movement.

Meanwhile fighting continued between pro-Rabbani forces and the Taliban west of Kabul in the Sanglakh Valley.

The Defence Ministry claimed that in a "sudden ambush" against a Taliban BM-1 rocket launcher site in Sanglakh its troops had killed an army officer of Pakistan nationality, and recovered incriminating documents from his corpse.

In the past month, the Kabul government has repeatedly accused Pakistan of militarily assisting the Taliban, while Pakistan has accused Mr. Rabbani of receiving support from India. Both sides deny the other's charges.

The Afghan capital has not yet come under direct attack by the Taliban but has been repeatedly threatened to target it.

The Kabul government also said Tuesday a Pakistani officer was killed during a government ambush on opposition-held territory west of Kabul.

"In this ambush a Pakistani officer has also been killed," said the defence ministry's spokesman, who goes only by the name Abdullah.

Pakistani leaders dismissed the claim and insist they are impartial observers to Afghanistan's long-running civil war.

"It's patently absurd," Foreign Office spokesman Hamid Gul told the Associated Press in the Pakistani capital Islamabad. "It's so visibly a fabrication it's not even worth commenting upon."

Israeli right wing struggles to tap opposition to W. Bank deal

TEL AVIV (AP) — Right-wing firebrand Moshe Feiglin advised fellow militants gathered in a hotel basement that they had a problem: Israelis seem indifferent to the once-dreaded prospect of a Palestinian state.

Such an eventuality was unthinkable to the 40 activists, mostly West Bank settlers, listening to Mr. Feiglin.

But it was business and usual throughout the land after Israeli agreed to hand the Palestinians control over West Bank towns that many religious Jews claim as an inseparable part of their country.

There was not even enough outrage to stage planned mass protests to block Israel's highways last Thursday, the day the expanded autonomy agreement was signed in Washington.

"It's every commander's nightmare: I said, 'follow me,' and found myself alone," said Mr. Feiglin, a 33-year-old U.S.-educated computer scientist who heads the Zu Artzenu (this is our land).

He attributed the failure to a tough police response to such past protests: "People just don't want to fight the police and get arrested anymore."

Most right-wing rallies, including a well-publicised campaign of illegal encampments on West Bank hilltops, attracted at most hundreds. The masses of veteran, secular Israelis, even those with reservations about the peace process, stayed home.

At the fore of these demonstrations are activists like those listening to Mr. Feiglin last week in a beachfront Tel Aviv hotel. Most are Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who oppose Israeli withdrawal for security reasons; many also oppose relinquishing West Bank land out of religious or nationalist ideology.

But they are far from a cross-section of Israelis.

Zeev Sternbach, a political scientist at the Hebrew University, maintained the sanguine atmosphere indicated "there isn't, and probably never was, a determined majority favouring permanent control of the territories."

"There is a deepening recognition that there is no serious alternative to the policy

of compromise," he wrote in the Haaretz daily.

In fact, a narrow majority of Israelis, about 55 per cent, say they support the peace process, and only about a quarter of vehemently against it, said pollster Hanoch Smith.

"Not too many people other than the settlers have a very special connection" to the West Bank and Gaza, Mr. Smith said. "An overwhelming majority say they haven't even been there recently."

But opponents of a Palestinian state warn not to count them out just because the strength of their protests is waning.

Leaders of the main opposition party, Likud, suspect their traditional supporters, who tend to be respect-

ful of authority, recoil from the sight of soldiers dragging protesters off hilltops and scuffles with police.

They note that most polls nonetheless show the opposition stands an even chance of unseating Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in election scheduled for November 1996.

Likud leaders planned a more conventional mass rally in Jerusalem this Thursday, just as parliament is to vote on the West Bank accord.

But while some right-wing politicians still speak of a Palestinian state in apocalyptic terms, Likud head Benjamin Netanyahu refuses to say he would repeal the autonomy accords. Aides hint they might accept Palestinian rule on some of the West Bank if other areas

could be salvaged.

Future Likud rallies reportedly will focus on land even Mr. Rabin wants to keep as part of a future final peace deal, such as the Jordan River Valley and areas around Jerusalem.

Eve Harow, an activist in the Efrat settlement just south of Jerusalem, said many people have concluded the government is ignoring demonstrations and therefore intend to "just wait it out until the next elections."

"Just because there aren't hundreds of thousands of people in the street doesn't mean there aren't hundreds of thousands, even millions of angry people," said Mr. Harow, 34, a Los Angeles native who immigrated to Israel in 1987.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Far-right puts death curse on Rabin

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli far-right activists have put an Aramaic death curse on Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for trying to make peace with the Palestinians. Haaretz newspaper reported Tuesday. Around 20 supporters of the outlawed anti-Arab group Kach prayed for Mr. Rabin's death outside his residence on Monday night, as rabbi Yossef Dayan read out the curse called "pulsu denura" (rod of fire) in Aramaic. "May Yitzhak, son of Rosa, perish by fire and the sword... for his sins," the prayer said in the ancient tongue. "May the good be possessed in this world be taken away. Let him perish for the evil he is inflicting on the sacred people, for the lands of Greater Israel that he is surrendering to our enemies... May all maledictions befall him until his death." Israel's grand rabbi, Israel Meir Lau, protested against such a curse on the head of government, especially on the eve of Yom Kippur (day of atonement), the most sacred day in the Jewish calendar.

Rabin's wife sends gift to baby Arafat

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Leah Rabin, wife of the Israeli prime minister, has sent a dove-shaped silver ornament as a peace gift for Yasser Arafat's baby girl, Zahwa. The Jerusalem Post newspaper reported Tuesday that Yitzhak Rabin's wife handed the present to mother Suha Arafat at the White House when they met at the signing of the West Bank accord last week. "May your baby always be cradled with peace," was the inscription on the ornament for Zahwa's crib.

S. Korea to send aid to Iraq

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea will send \$70,000 worth of medical supplies to Iraq as humanitarian assistance this month and is preparing to resume trade and investment ties with Baghdad as soon as U.N. sanctions are lifted. The Foreign Ministry said here Tuesday. A ministry spokesman told AFP that Seoul had obtained the approval of the U.N. Sanctions Committee for the shipment of "medical supplies and daily necessities" two weeks ago, and that they would be sent within the month. In New York, South Korean Foreign Minister Gong Ro-myung held talks Monday with his Iraqi counterpart, Mohammad Al Sahaf, on the resumption of trade and investment between the two countries as soon as the U.N. sanctions are lifted. Yonhap news agency said. Iraq owes South Korean contractors some \$1.35 billion in outstanding construction and import payment debts and Seoul is anxious to recoup the money as soon as possible. Yonhap quoted a spokesman for Mr. Gong as saying. The humanitarian aid is the first of its kind from South Korea since the outbreak of the Gulf war in 1990.

UAE creates team to battle drugs use

DUBAI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates has created a ministerial action committee to try to fight the growing traffic and use of drugs in this Gulf country, newspapers reported on Tuesday. The team includes the ministers of the interior, Islamic affairs, the economy, justice, health and youth, as well as military leaders, and aims to "mobilise efforts to fight against the threat of drugs," the press reported. The UAE brought in the death penalty for drugs smuggling in April amid mounting concern that the country was becoming a transit point for narcotics from the likes of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Police have seized more than eight tonnes of hashish, cocaine, heroin and opium in the UAE in the past three years and say drugs use is spreading to the local population as well as expatriates. They say the emirates attracts drugs traffickers because it is close to drugs-producing countries and its 500 kilometres (310 miles) of coastline are difficult to guard.

Libya, Philippines to discuss insurgency

MANILA (AP) — Philippine and Libyan officials this week will discuss progress in two-year-old peace talks between Manila and Muslim secessionist rebels, a senior Filipino official said Monday. The two sides also will discuss other bilateral issues such as the deployment of Filipino workers to Libya, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Libya, an influential member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), hosted peace talks between the government of the late President Ferdinand Marcos and the Moro National Liberation Front, the main Muslim secessionist faction fighting for Muslim self-rule in the southern Philippines. The talks led to the 1976 Tripoli agreement that called for the establishment of an autonomous Muslim region. The rebels, however, accused the Marcos government of renegeing on the agreement and resumed fighting until the strongman was ousted in February 1986. Sporadic fighting continued until 1992 when Indonesia, Libya and other leading OIC members helped bring the rebels and the Manila government under President Fidel Ramos back to the negotiating table. Formal talks, hosted by Jakarta, began in 1993. The talks, however, have bogged down on the question of the manner of establishing a provisional regional government.

Three killed in Mogadishu fighting

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Three people were killed and seven others wounded when supporters of two Somali warlords clashed in south Mogadishu late Monday, witnesses said Tuesday. Militiamen loyal to General Mohammed Farah Aidede and those supporting his rival Osman Ali Hassan "Atto" traded machine-gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades after a quarrel over the legitimacy of Gen. Aidede's self-declared government, which has been denounced by Mr. Osman Atto. A radio station supporting Aidede militiamen launched the attack on positions held by Atto loyalists, but that the offensive had been repulsed. The fighting lasted half-an-hour.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Madeline
14:30 Ghoul Writers
15:00 Tomorrow's World
15:30 Amazing Stories
16:00 Families
17:00 Children's Programme — Le Monde's English
17:30 Telefilm
18:00 News in French
18:15 Ushuaia
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious Universe
20:00 Anything for a Laugh
20:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:15 Doc — Sea Power-A Global Journey
22:00 News in English
22:25 Prim
23:45 Drama — Law and Order
24:45 Doc — Silk Road
00:30 Second Thoughts

PRAYER TIMES

04:10 Fajr
05:27 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:25 Dhuhr
14:46 Asr
17:22 Maghreb
18:39 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Switzerland, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 601757
Terresanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 626543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 771261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assumption International Church Tel. 623541
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Relative cold weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing

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at low altitudes and winds north-westerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly active and sea calm.

Min./Max. temp. 13/25
Amman 20/33
Aqaba 11/28
Jordan Valley 18/32

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 22 Aqaba 31. Humidity readings: Amman 45 per cent. Aqaba 43 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Nidal Al As'ad 751672
Dr. Yousef Al Faqih 700194
Dr. Mazen Nhai 830435
Dr. Abdul Rahim Mousaif 744085
First pharmacy 776326
Al Asma pharmacy 678555
Nairook pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 626730
Yasaweh pharmacy 649485
Shmeisani pharmacy 637680
Naimujh pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Al Omari 273032
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Ghassan Al Faqih 906130
Khalil pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 611111
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police (W) 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617111
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 866390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 605901
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 747111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53301

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre, 81381/352
Khalil Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Jabal Amman Maternity 642341/2
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine Shmeisani 6641714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Jalal, Al-Muasher 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafiah 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/90
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)983323
Jbn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)276555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272725
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)274101

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport, Tel. (06)53301-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
07:00 Damascus (RJ)
08:30 Jeddah (RJ)
09:10 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:10 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:15 Istanbul (RJ)
17:55 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
18:00 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:10 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:15 London, Berlin (RJ)
18:15 Rome (RJ)
18:15 Brussels, Madrid (RJ)
18:35 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
23:35 Beirut (RJ)
01:15 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:50 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
10:30 Amsterdam (KL)
12:15 Jeddah (SV)
12:30 Cairo (MS)
17:30 London, Beirut (BA)
17:30 Athens (PK)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
21:05 Samia (HY)
21:05 Athens (AH)
21:30 Larnaca (CY)
22:30 Athens (OA)
23:25 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

09:50 Rome (RJ)
10:00 Madrid (RJ)
10:40 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:10 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:45 Istanbul (RJ)
19:30 Colombo (RJ)
19:30 Athens (RJ)
19:30 Beirut (RJ)
20:10 Samia (HY)
20:30 Beirut (RJ)
21:15 Larnaca (RJ)
21:15 Athens (RJ)
22:30 Athens (RJ)
22:45 Aden (RJ)
23:00 Samia (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

07:45 Beirut (ME)
10:50 Athens (PK)
12:00 Jeddah (SV)
13:15 Cairo (MS)
18:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
21:55 Larnaca (CY)
22:00 Samia (HY)
22:05 Sharjah (AH)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:30 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper-lower price in fil per kg.

Apple 650/450
Banana 600/400
Banana (Mukammal) 620/420
Cabbage 200/150
Carrot 440/340
Cauliflower 320/220
Cucumbers (large) 180/120
Cucumbers (small) 280/180
Eggplant 700/500
Garlic 600/500
Grape 700/500
Guava 600/500
Lemon 180/100
Marrow (large) 250/220
Marrow (small) 200/180
Mushroom 200/140
Okra 900/750
Onion (dry) 500/400
Orange 200/150
Pepper (hot) 200/150
Pepper (sweet) 200/150
Pomegranate 370/270
Potato 300/200
Spinach 550/450
String Beans 1100/600
Tomato 1100/600

Sri Lanka rebels reportedly suffer major defeat; death toll hits 350

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas suffered a major setback Tuesday as the armed forces reported killing more than 250 rebels in fierce fighting, bringing the combined death toll from a two-day-old army offensive to at least 350.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) used suicide bombers in a bid to halt a military advance in their Jaffna peninsula stronghold but were pulverised by artillery and infantry, defence officials said.

Military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said some 1,000 LTTE men and women were sent into Atchchuvelli, an area that had been captured from the guerrillas Monday, and a ferocious four-hour battle ensued that at times saw hand-to-hand combat.

"We are certain that we killed over 200 Tigers. We have so far recovered 144 bodies, of both men and women Tigers. We found a lot of automatic rifles and mortars," Brig. Munasinghe said, adding, "This is a major debacle for the terror-

ists." The Tigers also suffered about 250 cadres wounded in action while army losses were put at nine soldiers killed and another 19 wounded. Fighting had died down by Tuesday afternoon and troops took position in newly captured areas.

Western diplomats and defence analysts here said that the losses were a serious blow to the Tamil Tigers who had earlier vowed to beat off any military advance inside Jaffna, the capital of a de facto state run by the rebels.

The losses were an especially hard blow, given that the Tiger offensive was led by the LTTE's deputy leader, Balraj, and a key local commander, Swarnam, defence sources said.

Shortly before taking on the ground troops, the LTTE deployed suicide bombers to ram an explosives-laden boat against a navy landing craft ferrying troops from the battle front back to their homes outside the war zone.

A military statement said 15 soldiers and three sailors aboard the landing craft, the

Ranagaja, were killed and another 40 wounded in the fierce two-hour battle, which took place off the northeastern Mullaitivu coast early Tuesday.

The navy sank seven Tiger boats and claimed killing at least 30 LTTE guerrillas from its Sea Tiger unit. It gave the names of five LTTE suicide bombers known as Black Sea Tigers who perished in the confrontation.

Defence sources said that the LTTE had also fired rocket-propelled grenades at the navy craft.

Brig. Munasinghe said they expected the Tigers to retaliate following the army's operation, code-named "Thunder Strike," which was launched inside the peninsula Sunday with the deployment of 7,500 infantrymen.

On Monday, 19 soldiers were lost for the claimed killing of 51 Tiger cadres.

The death toll in two days of fighting is 346, according to the military, added to which are six civilian dead, reported by the Tigers.

Tuesday's setback for the Tigers was reminiscent of a

debacle they suffered on July 28 when they tried to overrun an army complex in northeastern Sri Lanka, at Well Oya.

In that battle, the LTTE lost some 430 cadres. The army lost only two soldiers and one of them was killed in "friendly fire."

In another confrontation in the eastern Tikodai area, Police Special Task Force commandos and the Tigers exchanged fire, leaving three commandos and six rebels killed, the military said in a separate statement Tuesday.

For its part, the LTTE's clandestine radio was silent about the latest bloodletting but said that 50,000 civilians had fled their homes. Earlier the LTTE had said that 5,000 people were left homeless.

The Tigers are leading a campaign for a homeland for minority Tamils concentrated in the northern and eastern regions. More than 50,000 people have died in the conflict, which has dragged on since 1972.

Police find enough cyanide to kill 70,000 at Japan cult hideout

TOKYO (AFP) — Police said Tuesday they had found enough sodium cyanide in the suspected hideout of an Aum Supreme Truth member to kill 70,000 people, adding there was a danger of attacks by 10 fugitive members.

A camper found 17 bottles containing 8.5 kilograms (18.7 pounds) of cyanide on Sept. 28 near a tent in a mountainous area of Tochigi prefecture, north of Tokyo, a police spokesman said.

The bottles, only half of which had caps, were close to camping equipment, sweaters and food.

Satoru Hirata, 30, a member of the doomsday sect's "intelligence unit," is believed to have hidden at the camp. Police want to question him about the death of a Tokyo notary.

Sodium cyanide was found in devices intended to generate cyanide gas at a Tokyo subway station in May and at a train station in July. Police have attributed both attacks to Aum, saying as many as 25,000 people could have been killed if the

devices had worked as planned.

Sect members, including leader Shoko Asahara, are also charged with murder and attempted murder in the March 20 sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway which killed 11 people and injured more than 5,000.

Police said the latest find indicates Aum members might still have toxic substances that could be used in further terrorist attacks. Ten senior Aum members are still at large, and some are suspected of possessing toxic chemicals, including nerve gas.

Mr. Hirata and Sayuri Matsumoto, an Aum member believed to be behind the Tokyo train station cyanide incident in July, are believed to have hidden in the area where the cyanide cache was found for about a month. Police said they kept in touch with other Aum members with a pager and a cellular phone.

Meanwhile, the central government is expected soon to make a final decision whether to approve a move to outlaw the cult,

government officials said Tuesday.

A Tokyo district court is considering a government request to withdraw the sect's status as an official religious group, which provides tax breaks and other preferential treatment. A hearing is scheduled for Friday.

But even if the court agrees, the sect could still exist as an unofficial organisation. So public security authorities were considering applying the country's 1952 subversive activities prevention law, never invoked on any organisation, against the group. That would ban members from congregating and end its activities.

But Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said Tuesday that he would ask the ministry to handle the case "very carefully."

Some lawmakers, including members of his Socialist Party, say any change in the law governing religious activities may affect all religious groups.

Typhoon Sibyl buffets Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — Typhoon Sibyl buffeted Hong Kong for several hours Tuesday before roaring off to attack the southern coast of China.

The tropical cyclone, which left a trail of death and destruction across the Philippines, had been heading away from Hong Kong when it veered unexpectedly and sideswiped the British colony before dawn.

Emergency services reported 12 people sought hospital treatment for injuries sustained during the height of the typhoon. Two were admitted in satisfactory condition.

Most of the injured were hit by flying signs, scaffolding and debris whipped around by winds gusting at up to 100 kmh (60 mph).

Twenty-five villagers cut off by rising flood waters in a remote village near the border with China were rescued by dinghy.

The storm weakened late in the morning, enabling the Royal Observatory to lower the number eight typhoon warning signal at 11:30 am (0330 GMT) to a number three.

That told Hong Kong people their unexpected holiday was over and ordered them back to work.

Marriage registries, shops and the stock and capital markets reopened for the afternoon session although schools, the courts and many government offices remained closed.

Airlines began clearing a backlog of passengers which built up at Kai Tak Airport.

One incoming flight was diverted, 13 delayed and three cancelled, the Civil Aviation Department said. Seven outgoing flights were delayed and two cancelled.

Civil Aviation Department spokesman Albert Lam said the airport may have to remain open beyond its normal midnight (1600 GMT) curfew to cope with a backlog of about 25 flights, many delayed from Monday.

Hong Kong's dwindling fishing community, who took shelter behind breakwaters designed to protect them from typhoons, spent the afternoon bailing out their junks and trawlers but said they did not expect to venture out to sea for a day or two.



British Labour Party's shadow chancellor Gordon Brown gives his opening speech at the party conference in Brighton (AFP photo)

Labour Party leader faces down dissidents, sees British revival

BRIGHTON, England (Agencies) — Labour leader Tony Blair, buoyed by another victory over dissident left-wingers, will tell British voters Tuesday to put his party back in power or face years of economic decline.

In a speech to Labour's annual conference Tuesday afternoon, the opposition leader will argue that Britain under the "old and tired" ruling Conservatives is simply not equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Aides said the message would mark an attempt by Mr. Blair, after a year spent remoulding the party in his moderate image, to switch the emphasis to the tasks facing Labour if it wrests power from the Conservatives after 16 years in opposition.

"I did not come into politics to transform the party. I came into politics to transform the country. Just as Labour had to change, so must the country," a draft of the speech says.

Mr. Blair, who became leader 15 months ago, scored another clear-cut victory Tuesday over left-wingers who have been fighting a rear-guard action against his drive to dump old-fashioned socialist ideology and broaden the party's appeal to middle-class voters.

After a short debate, the conference endorsed a decision by Labour's ruling National Executive Committee to ditch left-winger Liz Davies as a parliamentary candidate for allegedly undermining the party's leadership.

The noisy arguments of Ms. Davies's backers, and other rumblings of dissent by old-style activists, had formed an uncomfortable backdrop for Mr. Blair to a conference meant to trun-

pet Labour's readiness for office after four general election defeats.

Mr. Blair's poll lead, though still commanding, has slipped to less than 30 percentage points and Prime Minister John Major's camp has suddenly seemed more confident about his prospects of retaining power at the next election, due by May 1997.

But the conference — displaying a discipline that has not always been evident during Labour's 16 years in opposition — has so far gone well for Mr. Blair.

Aides said the Labour leader planned to build on the early successes by telling the conference that it will be a revitalised Labour's task to lead Britain back into "the premier league of nations."

Fifty years after World War II and five years before the new millennium, Britain had reached a turning point. "The challenge to Britain is to modernise or to decline for ever," he says. Britain under the Conservatives had grown old and tired and only Labour could summon up the moral purpose needed to build a new social order.

As part of a new "contract with Britain," with echoes of U.S. Republican leader Newt Gingrich's "contract with America," Mr. Blair will outline plans to wean single mothers off social security and to reduce school class sizes, aides said.

He singles out the need to reform Britain's National Lottery and also intends to stress that the successful countries of tomorrow will be those that harness education and technology in a process of life-long learning.

Meanwhile the Daily Telegraph said Tuesday Mr. Blair has struck a secret

deal with the bosses of Britain's main trades unions giving them a central role in the party's electoral strategy.

The report said that the leaders of 12 major unions met Mr. Blair at a meeting two weeks ago. "At the meeting, which was not made public, Mr. Blair promised that improved rights for workers would be a key element of Labour's election campaign."

"In return, the unions would pour resources into the marginal seats that Labour must win to end more than 16 years in opposition," said the paper.

The revelations come just after a poll in a rival paper, the Guardian, suggested the reduced role of the unions in the party made voters more likely to vote Labour at the next election, due by 1997.

The Telegraph said: "Although Mr. Blair has given the public impression that he is keeping the unions at arm's length, documents passed to the Daily Telegraph show that in private he is relying on them more than ever to get him into Downing Street."

The paper concluded the revelations would be highly embarrassing for the Labour Party.

President of the Conservatives Brian Mawhinney immediately accused Mr. Blair of "breathtaking hypocrisy." It showed the party was still in the hands of the union, he added. "People are going to be disgusted at the idea that there is a secret deal."

A spokesman for the Labour Party dismissed the matter as "absurd," since meetings between Blair and the unions were held on a regular basis and were not secret.

Do pigeons commute? British scientists ask

LONDON (R) — Readers of one of Britain's most authoritative scientific journals have begun a debate over whether pigeons are using London's metro system to get about the capital. In letters to the New Scientist, several said they had noticed birds hopping on and off underground trains — apparently deliberately. Sabiha Foster reported seeing a pair of pigeons getting on a train at one station, Aldgate, staying by the door, and "alighting with purpose" at the next, Tower Hill. "How did they know the platform for Tower Hill was the same side of the carriage as that for Aldgate?" she asked. Another reader, noting that pigeons have renowned navigational facilities, wrote: "I see no reason why they should not have cottoned on to the fact that travel by tube saves their wings."

Keanu Reeves says no desire to marry

LONDON (R) — Hollywood heartthrob Keanu Reeves has no desire to get married. "I have friends who have made the leap but it is not for me," the 31-year-old star of the box office hit Speed told Women's Own magazine in an interview. "My parents split up when I was young and I have seen nothing to recommend marriage," told the British weekly magazine. Asked about allegations he was homosexual, Reeves said: "I've deliberately kept out of the gossip columns. I haven't been photographed with lots of girlfriends and I've kept my private life to myself."

Dutch drug dealer plays tag with police

GRONINGEN, Netherlands (R) — A convicted drugs dealer wearing an electronic tag as part of a trial in the northern Dutch city of Groningen carried on a lucrative drugs business from home, ANP news agency said. The 33-year-old man adhered diligently to the times he was allowed to be away from home, the electronic tag project leader told ANP. "Unfortunately he used the time to develop criminal activities." The man — one of two offenders chosen for the scheme — was arrested after a tip from one of his customers.

Finns leave EU meeting to catch a plane

LUXEMBOURG (R) — Finland's top ministers had to leave a European Union (EU) foreign ministers meeting early because their country had no plane to take them home. Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen and European Affairs Minister Ole Norrback left for the airport in late afternoon to catch a regular, scheduled flight, despite pending business on Russia and EU openness. Issues of special concern to Helsinki. A Finnish diplomat said the problem was that Finland has no government planes and ministers must travel by commercial airline. Worse yet for the ministers was that there was no direct flight to Helsinki from Luxembourg. The two had to change in Switzerland.

Buckingham Palace hauls in the tourists

LONDON (R) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth raised £3 million (\$4.8 million) this year by allowing paid visitors into Buckingham Palace, her London home, a palace spokesman said. The money will go towards the restoration of another of her palaces, Windsor, just outside London, which was badly damaged by a fire in 1992.

Kohl: East Germans making progress

BONN (R) — Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Tuesday that German unification was solving the material problems faced in the east but getting Germans from east and west to know each other was still a challenge.

In a televised address on German Unity Day, Mr. Kohl said eastern Germany had made considerable economic progress since it merged with the west on Oct. 3, 1990.

The chancellor also noted Germany had been at peace with its neighbours for 50 years and pledged it would do everything to make sure its relations stayed that way.

"Nowhere else in Europe is economic growth as strong as in eastern Germany," he said. Annual growth there, buoyed by massive transfer payments from the west, is about nine per cent.

"Other countries in

Eastern Europe have to struggle with far larger problems," he said, according to an advance text of the address.

"With hard work and confidence, we will master the economic and social problems in the foreseeable future," he said.

"In the long run, (improving) personal contacts among Germans are the bigger task for all of us. Here we need patience, good will and the readiness to listen to each other."

Mr. Kohl said he took seriously the concerns of people who were disappointed with the way united Germany had turned out.

"People in the east experienced dramatic changes in all facets of their lives in a very short time," he said. "Rebuilding the east remains our most important domestic task."

Mr. Kohl also paid a com-

pliment to the East German civil rights movement, which helped open the Berlin Wall in November 1989 but was then swept aside as Western-dominated parties quickly came to dominate the political scene.

"I would especially like to recall those men and women who bravely stood up to the Communist regime," he said. "Their example should encourage us to be more responsible with our mutual freedom."

Speaking about Germany's relations abroad, the chancellor said: "We Germans enjoy friendship and respect in the world community. We have lived in peace with our neighbours in Europe for 50 years. We will do everything in our power to make sure it stays that way in future."

Several mines, left over from the fighting last year or planted more recently, are scattered across the country and in the capital. The government has formed a mine-clearing squad with the help of U.S. experts who began training Rwandan technicians a month ago.

The authorities urged the population to report any unexploded mine or grenade. Reports said people had seen the mine which

killed the children but had done nothing about it.

In another development Rwandan Radio said four people had been arrested in Kibungu district in the southeast in connection with the deaths last Thursday of eight members of the same family in Rusumo village.

The eight were murdered by an unknown number of attackers armed with grenades, iron bars, hammers and knives.

Rwanda issues warning after mine deaths

KIGALI (AFP) — Officials warned citizens Tuesday, after four children were killed by a mine explosion here, to notify authorities if they spot any mines or other explosives still littering Rwanda after last year's civil war.

Rwandan radio said the four children had been playing with the mine in Gikondo district Monday when it exploded, killing them and injuring nine other people including se-

Do pigeons

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scientists ask

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Life slowly returns to normal in Comoros capital of Moroni after last week's coup led by French mercenary Bob Denard (AFP photo)

France sends commandos towards Comoros

MORONI (AFP) — France Tuesday turned the screws on mercenaries who led a successful putsch in the Comoro Islands, announcing it was sending commandos toward its former colony in the Indian Ocean.

French Navy ships, which are carrying landing dinghies, are already visible off the capital, and 4,000 French troops are on alert on the neighbouring island of Mayotte, on Reunion, to the east, and in Djibouti, on the Horn of Africa.

French Prime Minister Alain Juppe said after the coup last Thursday, led by French mercenary Bob Denard, that there was "no question" of military intervention — but that was what the defence minister of the time said just before paratroopers landed in 1989 to expel Denard and his mercenaries after a previous coup.

Some 1,500 French nationals live here, 1,000 of them with dual nationality, and French officials said in Paris Monday that all options remain open, despite Mr. Juppe's statement.

Twenty commandos from an elite unit of the paramilitary Gendarmerie are on

their way to the region as part of the "prepositioning" of French forces, a French government official said in Paris Tuesday.

Mercenaries were reinforcing their positions around an airport near Moroni. Two European mercenaries and at least 30 Comorian soldiers had taken up positions on the runway at Itsambouni Airport, which has not been used for years but could be a staging area for a French intervention, an AFP journalist reported.

One official said France was in an "observation phase" to see what Denard and his men intended before deciding on military intervention or backing a political settlement between politicians.

Meanwhile, Foreign Ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said in Paris Tuesday that France welcomed an announcement Monday by deposed Prime Minister Saambi El-Yashurtu, declaring himself interim president.

Mr. Yashurtu, who has taken refuge in the French embassy in Moroni and is also calling for French intervention, said he was seeking the formation of a

government of national unity.

Mr. Rummelhardt said France greeted Mr. Yashurtu's statement "with interest."

Comorian army Captain Ayoubu Combo, who headed a transitional junta, warned Monday that French military intervention would lead to civil war in these tropical islands off East Africa, between Mozambique and the island of Madagascar.

"We will not leave our country and we are ready to die," the bearded captain told journalists.

France has already suspended the aid — \$20 million a year — on which the 500,000 people of these Islamic islands, one of the poorest nations on earth, depend for survival.

One of the main opposition groupings, the Forum for National Recovery, representing six parties, called Tuesday for a French-led international force to expel the mercenaries and supervise elections for a new president.

The two "co-presidents" installed by the putschists, opposition politicians Mohammad Taki Abdul

Karim and Said Ali Kemal, also say they want a national unity government and have called a meeting of politicians Tuesday to discuss plans.

But the forum said it would not take part.

"We won't go," spokesman Abderaman Kudra told AFP.

"We refuse to recognise Bob Denard's coup or the government he wants to install."

He said the forum did not want to see the return of 80-year-old Djohar, still being held by the putschists at the Kandani Military Base near the capital, but wanted the mercenaries out.

Denard, 66, a Muslim convert who was the Comoros' strongman from 1978 to 1989 as chief of the Presidential Guard, has a Comorian wife and dual nationality.

Mr. Kemal told AFP that Denard had told him he had staged his last coup and wanted to retire on the islands.

"He would like to settle here for his retirement and his business," he said. "He's human, he's honest, he has a right to that."

Coup foiled in Sierra Leone, 6 held — military

FREETOWN (R) — Troops loyal to Sierra Leone's military government foiled a coup attempt Tuesday and six officers have been arrested, military sources said.

A Western diplomat and residents of the West African country's capital Freetown reported an exchange of heavy gunfire in the early hours of the morning.

There was no immediate word on casualties.

"The government in the early hours with loyal forces foiled a coup plot in which six officers have been arrested and detained at the central prison," one officer told Reuters.

The diplomat put the number of those held at 10, including the six officers he said were intercepted by loyal troops.

Residents said they heard sustained gunfire from the direction of the military headquarters, a concrete beachfront complex in

Wilkinson Road on the city's western outskirts.

Earlier senior officials at Freetown's Pademba Road Central Prison said six army officers with the rank of lieutenant or major had been arrested and brought to the jail, accused of plotting a coup.

"Spokesmen of the military government led by Captain Valentine Strasser said an official statement was expected on the alleged plot.

The capital Freetown was calm with people going to work as usual but the road to the prison was sealed off and military guards around it strengthened.

"We cannot release the names of the senior officers yet but those now detained are from the rank of major to lieutenant," one prison official said.

Sources close to the government, which took power in a coup in 1992 and is battling rebels, predicted further arrests.

Military sources said heavy fighting was raging around the southern provincial capital Bo. They said South African mercenaries using helicopter gunships were helping government troops to try to retake four townships in the area seized by rebels last week.

Bo residents said fighting marked by heavy bombardments from the gunships was raging for the third day with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels putting up stiff resistance.

Freetown residents also said fighter jets flew sorties from the capital's Lungi airport but that these looked different from Nigerian warplanes backing the army in the civil war which erupted in 1991.

There was no immediate confirmation of reports from Bo that the blue-and-white jets belonged to the South Africans from a private Pretoria firm.

The government hired the South Africans to train its

troops after rebels came close to the capital in May despite the presence of Nigerian and Guinean troops defending approaches to the city. The government has not denied reports that the South Africans have been involved in recent fighting.

Their intervention gave the army the initiative in the fighting, which has devastated Sierra Leone's mine-based economy. But the rebels raised the stakes by intensifying ambushes on highways, many of which closed, cutting off several towns and leading to hundreds of deaths from starvation.

Capt. Strasser, who took power promising a quick end to the war, announced in April the lifting of a ban on political parties. At least 11 parties have registered to contest presidential and general elections in February.

Dozens arrested after Mexico protesters burn buses

MEXICO CITY (R) — Police arrested dozens of people Monday after more than 10,000 protesters massed in Mexico City's central square and some torched buses to protest government policies and commemorate a 1968 student massacre, officials and witnesses said.

"There are several dozen people detained," Mexico City Attorney General Jose Antonio Gonzalez told Mexican television. "Four buses have been burned."

Mr. Gonzalez said police were investigating to determine which detainees would be freed and which would face criminal damage charges. The pro-government television channel said as many as 150 people may have been

arrested but that figure could not be confirmed.

Mr. Gonzalez described those arrested as "not a part" of the several protest marches held in Mexico City Monday which ended mostly without incident. He said "professional agitators" could be among those arrested but gave no other details.

Earlier, witnesses saw two buses set ablaze in the massive Zocalo Square in the centre of the capital, sending plumes of thick and black smoke into the air and causing small explosions as petrol ignited. No one was hurt by the blazes.

Shouting slogans against the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), a series of protest groups, including former Mexico City bus drivers, high

school and university students, supporters of the left-wing Democratic Revolution Party and schoolteachers converged on the Zocalo.

"We are using this march to show we are fed up," said 28-year-old Raul Cofradia, who told Reuters his father was killed in the 1968 massacre. "My father died in 1968, but nothing has changed."

Among slogans the protesters chanted were "down with the PRI."

Policemen in the square at different stages of the protest estimated the crowd at between 12,000 and 30,000 while organisers said there were many more.

Independent witnesses put the crowd at at least 10,000. The protest brought together bus drivers laid off when the city government

took over the Mexico City bus system earlier this year, aspiring students who say they have been unjustly denied places at universities and opponents of President Ernesto Zedillo's economic policies.

But the event belonged to the students. Armed with megaphones, they marched through the streets cursing government officials, accusing them of denying them an education and ruining their chances for employment.

Mexico is undergoing a deep recession following the December peso crash. More than a million people have lost their jobs, and soaring interest rates have left many unable to pay their debts despite a government plan to help them.

N. Korea expands military might despite economic woes — Seoul

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea added 10,000 men to its huge standing army this year and is continuing to develop long-range missiles despite its desperate economic problems, the South Korean military said in an annual report released Tuesday.

The annual white paper, obtained by the Korean press Monday, said the troop increase came through the creation of a new army corps and brought the strength of North Korea's armed forces to 1.04 million, one of the world's largest standing armies.

North Korea has also obtained 100 new armoured vehicles, 50 field artillery pieces, 10 naval support vessels and 100 aircraft and was focusing its missile development programme on the Taepdong 1 and 2, with a range of more than 1,000 kilometres, it said.

Last week, U.S. Republican Senator John Kyle was quoted as saying by the Washington Times that intelligence estimates indicated the Taepdong-2 might be able to hit the U.S. mainland by the year 2000.

The Defence Intelligence Agency estimates the Taepdong-2 large-warhead range would reach 7,500 kilometres while a smaller payload would increase its range to 9,920 kilometres.

"If it is even close to the truth ... it presents for the first time a very serious and relatively quick challenge to U.S. sovereignty," Sen. Kyle said.

Pyongyang also had eight

military factories for the production of chemical weapons, the capability to produce 100 Scud missiles a year, and stockpiles of toxic gas, the South Korean white paper said.

It is also now lobbying Moscow to assemble Russian MiG-29 fighter jets, and had purchased Russian M-25 helicopters, it said.

The paper, however, echoed the opinion of South Korean experts in saying the North did not yet possess a deliverable atomic weapon, despite U.S. experts' statements that Pyongyang probably has "one or two" nuclear bombs.

But it said the isolated state had more than 10,800 field artillery pieces, half of them self-propelled, which included 240 millimetre multiple rocket launchers and Frog-7 rockets, many of them massed within easy range of Seoul.

In 1994, Pyongyang also began construction of AT-40 anti-tank missiles in addition to its SA-16 portable anti-air missiles, it said.

South Korea has a standing armed force of 665,000 troops in its three services as compared to the North's 1.04 million. But the South's troops are backed by 37,000 American servicemen based here.

South Korea has since June sent almost 150,000 tonnes of free rice to the North to relieve desperate food shortages triggered by bad harvests. Japan also pledged 300,000 tonnes,

half of it free.

On Tuesday, Japan signed an agreement in Beijing to send an additional 200,000 tonnes of rice to the North.

The accord, signed at the Japanese embassy in Beijing by Shigeru Tamesue, director of the operations department of Japan's food agency and Kim Jong Gi, secretary general of North Korea's International Trade Promotion Committee, followed two days of talks in Beijing.

The talks did not touch on the possibility of the normalisation of ties between Japan and North Korea, a senior Japanese official told reporters after the signing.

Under the agreement, Pyongyang has given assurances the rice will be used only for civilian purposes and will not be re-exported, the official said.

Pyongyang is to pay for the rice within a 30-year period at an annual interest rate of two per cent for the first 10 years. After that, the annual interest rate will rise to three per cent, the official said.

The terms were the same as for a previous emergency shipment agreed in June.

Japan agreed in June to supply North Korea with 300,000 tonnes from its reserves of imported rice to help North Korea overcome food shortages, half on deferred payment terms and the other half through the Red Cross.

The official said it was not possible for Japan to monitor distribution of the rice

but added that he expected the emergency shipments to be used fully to fill food shortages.

"I don't think they have any use but to feed their people," he said.

In the latest round of negotiations, North Korean officials had talked in terms of a need for millions of tonnes of rice aid this year to feed their people, he said. The amount Pyongyang said it needed was "more or less" close to the figure of 3.0 million tonnes, the official said.

"The flooding added to their problems," he said. "They need a much larger amount of grain from abroad."

Pyongyang stunned observers this year by breaking with its policy of stubborn self-reliance and asking Seoul and Tokyo for emergency grain, saying initially that bad weather had caused "minor and temporary" setbacks to the spring harvest.

North Korean officials said last week that the problems were far worse following calamitous floods in the summer that affected 5.4 million people, or one-fifth of the population.

North Korea has since said it suffered \$15 billion in damage, especially to agriculture, from summer floods.

Japan would not be discussing further emergency rice deliveries for North Korea from its stocks of imports, the Japanese official said. "We have no rice left," he said.

U.S.: N. Korea is living up to all accords

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea is living up to all agreements on its nuclear facilities while talks on new nuclear power plants continue in New York, the State Department spokesman said.

"North Korea continues to adhere in all respects to the agreed framework," said spokesman Nicolas Burns, referring to conditions for considering international help to install nuclear reactors that would not be used in a weapons programme.

Mr. Burns said the New York talks, which resumed Saturday and continued Monday, were focusing on implementation of the agreed framework, which is aimed at ending any North

Korean nuclear weapons development.

A spokesman for the U.S.-led international consortium engaged in the talks with North Korea in New York described Monday's session as "useful and businesslike," another session was planned Tuesday.

The spokesman for the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two sides were going over the framework agreement "line by line, sometimes word by word."

Mr. Burns offered no assessment of Monday's session, but he said the new phase of talks, which began two weeks ago in Kuala

Lumpur, has become the main focus of U.S. diplomacy with the North Koreans.

Mr. Burns said that although there is still interest in what is happening "behind the scenes" in North Korea, that would not affect the New York talks.

Under the 1994 framework agreement, North Korea froze its nuclear programme in exchange for two Western-designed light-water reactors, worth \$4 billion.

The North Koreans are demanding additional compensation for the money they have invested in the nuclear power programme that led Western intelligence to conclude they were trying to build nuclear

bombs. Mr. Burns said that despite some opposition to the arrangement in Congress, the Clinton administration still has hope that final legislation to be worked out by a congressional conference committee will provide the \$20 million U.S. contribution to the project.

"This is still among the most important issues that the United States faces, and that is our very, very strong effort to continue the freeze on North Korea's nuclear programme, continue implementation in all dimensions of the agreed framework," Mr. Burns said.

Morale reported slipping in U.S. forces

WASHINGTON (AP) — In barracks, on airfields and aboard ships where a shrinking number of Americans in uniform toil daily, the dark side of U.S. Defence Department savings is taking a toll that can't be measured in dollars and cents.

"Officers and enlisted personnel are reaching burnout," says a report to Defence Secretary William Perry. "Doing more with less is affecting morale."

A Pentagon advisory group drafted the report based on interviews with more than 3,000 men and women this summer at U.S. bases in the Pacific region.

Not everyone is being overtaxed, of course, and for many the added strain is manageable. But in the five years of what the Pentagon calls "downsizing," the U.S. military's workload around the globe has actually increased.

In the army and air force, the percentage of people deployed away from home

stations at any one time is twice what it was four years ago, said Louis Finch, deputy undersecretary of defence for readiness.

What's to blame for the declining morale? The report lists more frequent duty away from home, slower promotions, erosion of benefits, inadequate child care and housing, which in one case was likened to a slum.

The consequences: "Enormous stress" on the families, weaker job performance, and an inclination for more qualified people to quit. Alcohol abuse and antidepressant drugs are major problems in more stressful postings like Korea.

Living and working conditions at posts in Korea and other Pacific areas are in many ways tougher than at overseas posts like Germany, in part because most U.S. personnel in Korea are not accompanied by spouses.

But the report said even

taking those differences into account, many of the same signs of stress are cropping up at U.S. bases around the globe, not just in the Pacific.

John Marsh Jr., a former secretary of the army and now head of a task force appointed by Mr. Perry to study the military's "quality of life" problems, said "a number of the observations" made by the advisory panel reinforced the conclusions his own group is forming. He would not discuss the issues in detail.

Mr. Perry has expressed concern about overburdening today's military. To ease the strain, the military already is making more use of reserve forces for today's overseas missions, including operations in Bosnia, Iraq and Haiti.

The advisory group, the Defence Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, interviewed men and women at 18 U.S. installations including Elmendorf Air Force Base,

Alaska; Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii; Yokosuka Naval Station, Japan; army and air force bases in South Korea and marine bases in Okinawa.

Among findings: — Housing is a problem, both on and off base. Sometimes on-base housing is too scarce or of poor quality, "overcrowded, unsanitary and (with) a 'slum atmosphere,'" the report said.

— Support or counseling services are overburdened. Even where chaplains or other services are available, some military people are reluctant to use them lest their use would undermine chances for promotions.

— Sexual harassment of women remains "pervasive and subtle," the report said. In Korea, women reported being sexually harassed while off-duty, often by higher-ranking men.

— Child care services are too expensive, facilities overcrowded.

French Socialist leader faces new graft accusation

PARIS (R) — French Socialist leader Henri Emmanuelli, already under a one-year suspended jail sentence for receiving illicit campaign funds, faced fresh accusations of illegal funding Tuesday from an ex-member of parliament.

The newspaper Le Monde and Europe 1 Radio published a letter from former Deputy Jean-Pierre

Destrade to an investigating magistrate in which he said MR. Emmanuelli had appointed him to raise funds from big supermarket chains between 1988 and 1992.

Mr. Emmanuelli was Socialist Party treasurer at the time. He became party leader last year and is due to hand over that role to defeated presidential candi-

date Lionel Jospin later this month.

In the letter dated Aug. 29, Mr. Destrade said his activities as a fund-raiser included demanding payments of up to six million francs (\$1.2 million) from retail companies in exchange for permission to build hyper-

markets. "I raised 33 million francs (\$6.6 million) in covert

funds for the PS (Socialist party)," which was in power at the time, he wrote.

Mr. Destrade is under judicial investigation for alleged fraud, embezzlement and forgery. The chairmen of retailers Promodes and Auchan have also been placed under investigation.

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Opinion & Analysis

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From ideals to reality

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan made a very important point Monday when he told the opening session of a Pan-Arab Conference on education at the University of Jordan that it was time we discussed the development of human resources on the basis of standards that are objective, substantive and applicable for all citizens. This has been one of the biggest challenges the country has faced since its establishment and remains as the main crisis clogging optimum gain from the country's human resources and potential.

Even more challenging in the words of the Crown Prince is the willingness and ability of the government to heed these words and translate them into reality. It is frustrating for all of us to see our leaders offer timely counsel, and then to see this counsel being effectively disregarded by public and private sectors alike. Provincialism, factionalism and sectarianism, Prince Hassan warned the audience, have in effect created components in our society that are incompatible with the public's own interests and perspectives.

These are the woes not only of Jordan but of most nations of the world. There have been successes in some countries, however. In Canada, for instance, multiculturalism has been promoted to some degree of success as the mainstay of the Canadian federation. In other societies such as the U.S., the melting pot strategy was endorsed and applied vigorously as the surest way to maintain cohesion and unity. There are, of course, many "happy medium" policies that some states have incorporated into their systems to strike harmony and camaraderie between the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the population. Whether we in the Arab World opt for either approach, it is clear that we need to reflect more carefully on the address of the Crown Prince and start treating people equally irrespective of their faith, ideology or origin. Admittedly, like others in the region, we still have a long way to go before we can begin to implement equality amongst all nationals whether de facto or de jure. But until we do that exploitation of our full human resources and potential will remain unrealised. For its economy, social and even political development, this is a loss this country can no longer afford to sustain.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Dustour Tuesday discussed a declaration issued by political groups who oppose normalisation with Israel, to abort deals with the Jewish state. The opposition parties openly declared their intention to foil the Wadi Araba and Oslo agreements, but failed to say how they would achieve that goal with their limited means and members, wrote Saleh Qallab. According to lists submitted to the Ministry of Interior membership does not exceed 14,000, the writer added. The opposition groups, wrote Mr. Qallab, are divided and weak and do not agree on common goals. Had the opposition been strong enough and backed by a wide popular base, they could have foiled the deal of a settlement with Israel from the start and before the Convening of the Madrid conference, continued the writer. In the writer's view, these parties, which habitually issue big slogans declaring their rejection of any settlement, are merely trying to escape from facts and present realities.

JORDANIANS would like to share unity with other Arab countries, or at least a confederation, but without Americans or Israelis shaping such matters for them or determining their future, and Tareq Masarweh in Al Ra'i daily Tuesday. Arab countries will opt for unity or confederation when and how they choose and out of a desire to safeguard Arab interests and not to serve the purpose of outside powers, wrote the writer. Why should President Clinton or the Foreign Minister wish to raise the question of a confederation between Jordan and Palestine at this stage when the Palestinians have not yet recovered their lands or established their state, asked the writer. He said it is clear that Israel is trying to escape from recognising the full rights of Palestinians in determining their own destiny and an independent Palestinian state as a neighbour. The writer said that Israel is seeking to give the Palestinians an autonomous powers rather than a state, the dream which the Palestinians have been struggling to fulfil.

Washington Watch

SOME THINGS change some things remain the same.

It was impossible to avoid making comparisons between last week's Israeli-Palestinian White House ceremony and the September 1993 Washington signing of the Declaration of Principles (DoP). The days leading up to the 1993 event were filled with expectations: A psychological and emotional breakthrough was occurring, history was being made. This year, on the other hand, found neither the Arab-American, nor American-Jewish community leadership expressing enthusiasm at the prospect of yet another White House event.

For many, the hopes raised in 1993 had been dashed during the two long and hard years that followed. Continued repression and violence, coupled with the lack of progress in implementing the political aspects of the DoP and economic development, left supporters of peace wanting. Among both Arab-Americans and American-Jews, it appeared that the opponents of peace had the upperhand.

Further diminishing enthusiasm was the perception that the most recent negotiations had been too long, too hard-fought and had yielded a product too imperfect to create a workable solution.

Since so few were happy with the results, what was there to celebrate?

While the events of September 1993 left the Arab-American and American-Jewish leaderships euphoric, September

Reactions to the Washington signing of PLO-Israel deal

ber 1995 resulted in a more serious recognition of mutual responsibility. This was, if anything, the central theme projected by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the many speeches they gave during their two days in Washington.

There clearly is a new relationship that has developed among the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships. Their handshake and smiles didn't seem forced this time, and neither did their words. Mr. Rabin, Mr. Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres actually spoke about one another with humour and warmth. Mr. Rabin even praised his Foreign Minister Peres, in glowing terms — an act which some in the American Jewish community noted was more indicative of the changing attitudes than the warm words of praise and support he offered to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Equally telling of this change in attitude were comments both Mr. Rabin and Mr. Peres made separately in public events during their two-day visit to Washington.

Speaking before a gathering of Jewish leaders, Mr. Rabin strongly condemned those who attack the peace process. He chided those in the Jewish community who think that because they give money to Israel, they can dictate its policy. It was the policy of his government to

honour and complete this peace process, and if his U.S. Jewish opponents didn't like it they could be said, in effect, "keep their money."

At some point in his remarks Mr. Rabin noted that the goal of the peace process was to see Israel living next to — and he said — "an independent Palestinian state." After a pause, he corrected himself saying that it would be "something less than a state." A number of Jewish leaders who were present noted that Mr. Rabin often used the word "state," and during his pause, there was no negative audience reaction. Mr. Rabin's "apparent" miscue was no surprise and created no shock — a Palestinian state is an inevitability and most American-Jews know it.

For his part Mr. Peres, speaking before a mixed Arab-American and American-Jewish audience, also gave new insight into the changing attitude. He spoke of having come to understand the misery that Palestinians have had to endure and noted that he has learned in his life that no one has the right to take freedom and independence away from any other people. As he spoke passionately about these feelings, there were whispers in the audience commenting on the Foreign Minister's very personal expression of feeling for Palestinian suffering.

For his part, Mr. Arafat

worked hard on the day following the Thursday ceremony. He began the day at a Builders of Peace breakfast, urging more investment in the West Bank and Gaza. After a few official meetings, the Palestine National Authority (PNA) president spent a tough hour answering questions from the editorial board of the Washington Post. He then attended back-to-back luncheons hosted in his honour in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

He again received tough and pointed questions and gave back tough and pointed answers. Many of the members of Congress who attended were the very same members who only one week earlier were rudely insulting Mr. Arafat and calling for an end to U.S. financial support for the PNA. A number of those same congressmen indicated that they had been very impressed by the PNA president's straightforward answers to their questions. The Senate and congressional sessions both ended with handshakes, photo-ops and commitments to work together to make the process a success — a very different tune from a week ago.

The combined result of the presences of these leaders in Washington, their words, and the White House ritual has been to create among Arab-Americans and American-Jews a new sense of com-

By Dr. James Zogby

mitment to the peace process. Cynics have become believers — but believers who realise that the success of this process will require hard work.

It is clear that the current agreement is, at best, a weak compromise. Absent U.S. pressure on Israel to give more the Palestinians got not what they deserved but what they could get.

The most optimistic and realistic way to describe this pact is that it represents neither a half-full nor half-empty cup for Palestinians. Rather, it is the beginning of having a cup at all, and now comes the chance to fill it. Will the landscape that mar the landscape of the accord (e.g. too many settlers too many checkpoints, too little land and water) explode in the faces of those who are earnestly hoping to make this peace work?

It is not time that will tell — it is the commitment of leadership in both the region and in the U.S. that will shepherd the process through to a successful completion. We left the September 1993 signing with euphoria — but with a passive sense that with the handshake, reality had changed. We left the September 1995 events knowing that reality had not changed. Feelings and some attitudes have changed — but for reality to change, the new relationship and attitudes must be transformed into hard new facts. This will require a mutual investment and commitment to implementing Palestinian rights despite the explosions and protests that are bound to occur.

It Occurred to Me

By Ali Kassay

Hailing an adventure

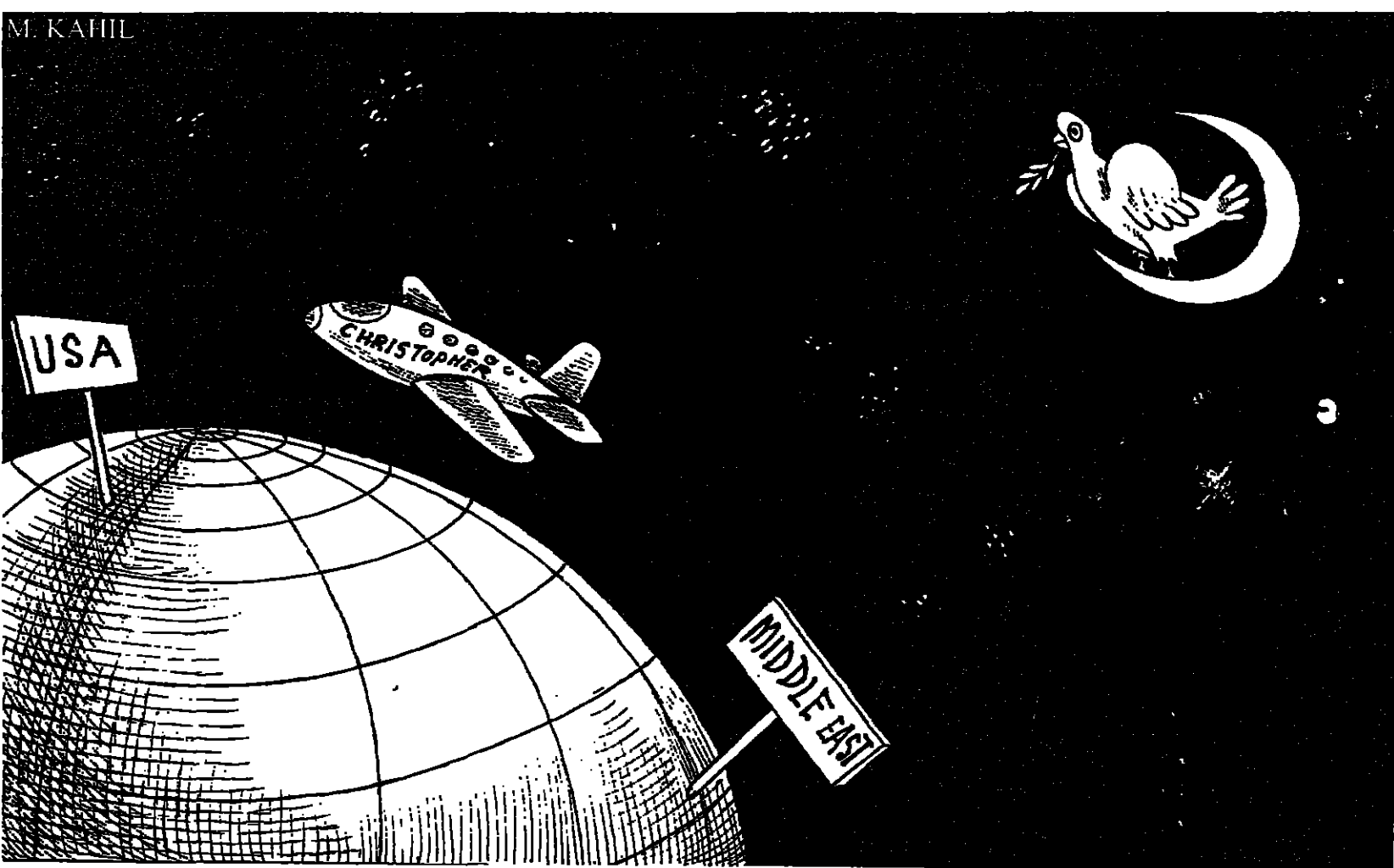
Jordan, as the world knows, takes tourism seriously and seeks actively to develop this industry. Why, then, does it persist in ignoring an area which, if developed, may attract millions in revenue? I refer here to adventure tourism.

The lover of adventure can fulfil his quest without setting foot outside Amman, simply by taking a taxi. Attempt, if you will, the contortionist's feat of squeezing yourself onto the seats, which are invariably lopsided, slashed at various places, and unsteady on their runners. Notice, if you will, the sharp contrast between the red and white no smoking sign on the windshield, and the red and white packets of cigarettes on the dashboard.

As the journey starts, your sense of danger is tickled by the discovery that safety belts, mandatory by law, are non-functional. Your detective instincts are challenged by the enigma surrounding the driver. His identity card which, by law, has to be displayed prominently, bears a photo rarely if ever compatible with his face. Even where compatibility exists, his identity remains unknown because the information in Arabic is written in a free and largely illegible hand, and it overflows into the space allocated for the English text, which is then omitted for the lack of space.

Seriously, if tourists are to feel welcome in this country, taxis (and drivers) should be made road worthy. Vehicles are often so rickety that they seem to be held together only by paper staples, chewing gum and string. This, in all fairness, is not entirely the fault of drivers. Regulatory bodies pass codes and regulations, apparently in total disregard to the realistic prospects of implementing them. In reality, taxes on spare parts are so exorbitant as to make maintenance unfeasible. Why not exempt taxis and their spare parts from all levies, and simply tax the income of the taxi?

Equally serious is the need for a campaign to instruct taxi drivers in certain basic codes of conduct like washing regularly, shaving either regularly or not at all, and not using the bare finger for excavation work in the nostrils. Two more messages need to be drummed in: the first is that a non Arab man is not necessarily a fair target for the driver's abuse; the second, and more important one, is that a non Arab woman is not necessarily a fair target for the driver's libido. The revelation is long overdue that a woman may don short trousers and a light shirt, merely because the temperature exceeds forty degrees in the shade, and not to invite on herself the worst excesses of Sodom and Gomorra.



Unrest in Karachi still Bhutto's biggest bugbear

By Alistair Lyon
Reuters

KARACHI — After nearly two years in power, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is still grappling with daily killings in Pakistan's biggest city, Karachi.

Karachi was paralysed on Sunday by a one-day strike called by the ethnic opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) in protest at what it said was the killing on Thursday of three MQM workers in police custody. Police say they died in a shootout.

Keen to reassure wary foreign investors, Mrs. Bhutto launched a big effort in July to crush what she calls a "mini-insurgency" and stop ethnic and sectarian strike plaguing the southern port. Security forces cracked down on MQM militants, arresting more than 200 and killing dozens of others in alleged clashes.

Mobile telephone and pager networks in the teeming city of 12 million were cut off to disrupt MQM communications.

Simultaneously, the government began peace talks

which have yet to bear fruit. Last week the MQM boycotted one session and said it would not return to the table until the government stops the security forces from dealing summarily with its workers.

Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar, a retired general, says the government's policy of talking loudly and wielding a big stick will restore peace to Karachi by the end of the year.

The evidence is mixed. The daily death toll dipped noticeably in July, but has since crept back up, with 48 people killed last week and 149 in September. That has brought the total for this year to 1,523, approaching double the 800 who died in 1994.

Many of the victims, who include 135 policemen, were kidnapped and tortured before being killed by anonymous assassins — no groups claim responsibility in this dirty war.

Altaf Hussain, London-based leader of the MQM, accuses Bhutto's government of preparing for "civil war and genocide" by arming unnamed groups to unleash against his people.

The MQM, which will not admit it is waging a guerrilla war as well as a political struggle, has hit back by disrupting Pakistan's industrial and commercial hub with frequent strikes.

Top MQM negotiator Ajmal Dhlavi told Reuters last week that the talks had made no progress and none was likely while Mrs. Bhutto, whose vote base is in rural Sindh Province, stays in power.

"We have a political understanding with Nawaz Sharif," he said, explaining that the leader of the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League had accepted all the MQM's demands.

Some political commentators say Mrs. Bhutto cannot make too many concessions to the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, most of whom arrived from India after partition in 1947, without offending her landlord backers in Sindh, of which Karachi is the capital.

Others say her government is taking its cue from the army, which withdrew troops from Karachi in November after 29 months but still plays a powerful role through its control of

the paramilitary rangers sharing security duties with police.

"Everything happening in Sindh Province is connected to the army and intelligence agencies," Dhlavi said. "They want to crush the MQM or divide it into competing factions."

Businessmen in the bustling chaos of Karachi are divided over whether the government has really weakened the MQM.

But they agree on the urgent need to stem the violence to restore the shaken confidence of foreign and local investors.

"The government is very eager to get foreign investment, but foreign investors are shy because of what they see on television," said S.M. Muneer, president of federation of Pakistan chambers of commerce and industry.

"Law and order has improved... but business confidence is not good. There must be a political solution and the government should take a tough stand on terrorists," he said.

"Our foreign customers don't want to come to Karachi any more," said Khalid Iqbal, chief executive of Quetta Textiles Li-

imited. "They ask to come to Lahore or want us to go to Dubai or they just divert their business to Delhi or Bombay."

Still, Mohibullah Shah, secretary of the State Board of Investment, believes Pakistan will lure \$4 billion of foreign direct and equity investment in 1995, mostly in power projects.

"No doubt law and order in Karachi is a handicap, but we have put across the message that Pakistan is an attractive place to invest," he told Reuters.

A survey by Business South Asia published by the Economist intelligence unit recently polled multinational companies on how they viewed Pakistan as a target for investment.

It said 48 per cent of 78 respondents rated Pakistan fourth most attractive of five emerging markets, while 36 per cent saw China, India, Vietnam and Cambodia as better bets.

"When the (MQM government) talks started, people hoped some settlement would take place," said Sirajuddin Cassim, president of Karachi stock exchange. "Now they've lost all hope."

Betselem demands independent autopsy of Palestinian-American who died in PLO detention cell

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — An Israeli human rights group has demanded that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat authorise an independent autopsy of a Palestinian-American who died after being detained by Palestinian security agents.

"The death of Azzam Musleh is yet one more example of the (Palestinian) preventive security service's failure to uphold its basic obligation to respect human rights," the Betselem group said in a letter to Mr. Arafat.

Musleh, 52, is the fifth man to die in Palestinian custody since the Gaza Strip and Jericho became autonomous in May 1994. Relatives say his body bore marks of torture.

Betselem demanded that an autopsy be performed, even though the procedure violates Muslim tradition. Mr. Arafat chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has already ordered an investigation into the death of Mr. Musleh, who returned to his native West Bank four years ago after 21 years in the United States, where he owned a supermarket in Dallas, Texas.

A Palestinian official, speaking anonymously, said President Bill Clinton personally asked Mr. Arafat to

look into Mr. Musleh's death. "The case has reached the highest level," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

A U.S. official, also speaking anonymously, would only confirm that the issue of the dead American had been discussed with Palestinian in Washington.

The U.S. government said Monday it was concerned over the death. But State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said there were no plans to set up an independent U.S. inquiry into the death.

But State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said there were no plans to set up an independent U.S. inquiry into the death.

"The United States is concerned about the circumstances surrounding the death," Mr. Burns told reporters.

Mr. Burns called Mr. Arafat's probe into the death "certainly appropriate." But he added: "Right now, there are no plans for an independent American investigation. We will concentrate on working with the Palestinian Authority to pursue this issue."

The U.S. deputy consul general in Jerusalem, John Barger, went to Jericho on

Saturday and spoke with Palestinian police officials.

"We'll obviously be following this very, very closely through our consulate general in Jerusalem," Mr. Burns said.

Last Wednesday, Mr. Musleh was playing cards in a coffee shop in his home village of 'Ain Yabroud in the West Bank when Palestinian agents drove up and arrested him, according to witnesses.

Relatives said the agents belonged to the preventive security service headed by Mr. Arafat's West Bank security chief Jibril Rajoub, who is based in the PLO enclave of Jericho.

Early Friday, Mr. Musleh's body was returned to 'Ain Yabroud. His son, 20-year-old Shabed, said the body was bruised and had cigarette burns on the back and legs. A reporter who saw Musleh's face before the burial saw welts, cuts and bruises.

Palestinian officials have denied Musleh was beaten to death. Palestinian Attorney General Khaled Al Kidra said Sunday that Musleh headed a gang of thieves and died of a heart attack when investigators confronted him with the evidence.

Mr. Kidra said the death was being investigated and that he hoped to have results within two days.

Journalist held in custody

(Continued from page 1)

Qudab. One day after the article was published in Al Hayat, Mr. Masarweh demanded in his daily column in Al Ra'i that Mr. Ne'matt and Al Hayat be taken to court, and said that he was planning to do so himself.

"We will go to court to find out who these 'informed sources' and 'official sources' who have relayed to Al Hayat the government's concern over the Iraqi regime," Mr. Masarweh wrote.

In his report, Mr. Ne'matt wrote that "Iraqi institutions are trying to recruit Jordanian journalists and writers and working on winning over all forces that support the Iraqi regime by giving money

or gift or paying direct salaries."

Under the current Press and Publications Law, reporters should reveal their sources if the court decides "this would protect national security, prevent crime or attain justice."

If found guilty, Mr. Ne'matt could face fines and imprisonment.

The controversial report came after the defection to Jordan of Iraqi top military weapons expert Hussein Kamel, and his call from here for overthrowing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

But the detention of Mr. Ne'matt caught most journalists by surprise, especially that it took place prior to referring the case to court

and pressing charges against the defendant.

It was not yet known why Mr. Ne'matt was denied bail; judicial sources refused to comment on the issue.

But Mr. Ne'matt's lawyers, Ayman Abu Sharkh, was quoted by international news agencies as saying he was trying to appeal against the prosecutor's decision and to seek his release on bail.

Meanwhile, the Paris-based Reporters Without Frontiers organisation appealed to His Majesty King Hussein to "use his influence to rescind the detention measure" against Mr. Ne'matt.

"This detention of (14) days appears too excessive in relation to the charges being investigated against him," the appeal, a copy of which was sent to the Jordan Times, said.

O.J. Simpson is acquitted

(Continued from page 1)

American football field, fame-making television commercials for a rental car company, pop culture status for his roles in the "Naked Gun" movie spoofs.

His private life was something else. Prosecutors said Mr. Simpson's outward strength of body and personality hid psychological weakness. He was, they said, racked by jealousy, plagued with anger, bent on control in every situation. He was a time bomb.

The bomb exploded, according to prosecutors, on June 12, 1994.

Mr. Simpson's defence rested on the simple premise that the one place he was not that night was at his ex-wife's home, where the throats of Ms. Simpson and Goldman were slashed.

At the crime scene were bloody footprints in his shoe size, 12, and blood drops bearing Mr. Simpson's genetic markers. Near the bodies was a glove in his size — and of a style identical to that of gloves his ex-wife bought him

which he wore at televised football games.

At Mr. Simpson's house was the glove's apparent mate, smeared with incriminating evidence: blood with the genetic markers of him and the two victims. Also on it was a hair similar to Ms. Simpson's and fibers almost identical to those in the carpeting of Mr. Simpson's Bronco.

There was Mr. Simpson's blood on his driveway, Mr. Simpson's blood in the foyer, and a pair of bloody socks in his bedroom. The sock blood contained Ms. Simpson's genetic markers, as well as Mr. Simpson's.

In his Bronco vehicle, there was more blood: on the steering wheel, the door, the centre console and the carpeting.

The trial spanned more than a year from jury selection to closing arguments. Jurors were locked down in a hotel to protect them from media contamination, corruption and compromise.

The prosecution case consumed nearly six months.

Without a known eyewitness or a murder weapon, prosecutors spun a circumstantial evidence case built on the theory that Mr. Simpson had the motive and opportunity to kill, and left a literal trail of blood from the crime scene to his house.

The defence was simple: O.J. did not do it.

Just who did do it — and why so much of the evidence pointed to Simpson — were more problematic for the Simpson camp, which crafted a two-pronged defence: Simpson was a victim of a police frame-up and mishandling.

The defence argued that the glove at Mr. Simpson's house was planted by a racist rogue cop named Mark Fuhrman, who has wanted to nail Mr. Simpson since 1985.

When Mr. Fuhrman — an alleged hater of interracial couples — responded to a domestic violence call between Mr. Simpson, who is black, and Ms. Simpson, who was white.

The black-majority jury was urged to acquit Mr. Simpson to send a message that police corruption and racism would not be tolerated.

Qadhafi to visit expellees

(Continued from page 1)

proved his point to the world and that he will take them back," said Umm Adel, a woman who left the camp into Egypt en route to Gaza.

Preparations were underway Tuesday, with some 150 extra security men deployed to keep order, Egyptian officials said.

A podium was set up and strings of lights hung around the camp of 80 tents erected by the Libyan authorities, while a t-shaped marquee was put up on the Libyan side of the border and Libyan flags hoisted at Musaid.

Egyptian journalists who entered no-man's land said they saw around 500 Palestinians in the camp on Tuesday.

According to the United Nations, 5,000 Palestinians have already been thrown out of Libya, and the pace of expulsions picked up in recent days with Libyan author-

ities expanding the border camp.

Two field hospitals, a makeshift mosque, a school and an electrical generator have been set up.

Hundreds more were expected at the border later in the day and on Wednesday from Tobruk, 120 kilometres inside Libya. They have already been flown to Tobruk from various parts of Libya.

Another 600 Palestinians left the port of Tripoli on Monday aboard a boat headed for Syria, the Egyptian government newspaper Al Ahram said.

If Damascus allows them to enter, it will be the first time Palestinians have been expelled directly from Libya in Syria, Lebanon, whose policy is closely tied to Syria's, has refused Palestinians entry and cut off all sea links with Libya on Sept. 8.

Israel

(Continued from page 1)

each year, preparing through prayer and reflection to stand before God in judgment.

This year there is also anger, with many feeling of alienation after the secular Israeli government in last week signed an accord conceding to the Palestinians West Bank land which the religious 'claim as a Biblical birthright.

The agreement has aggravated existing tensions between Israel's secular majority and the observant community — variously estimated at from a fifth to a third of the country's 4.5 million Jews.

"Both communities are screaming at each other, they are not talking to each other," said Rabbi David Hartman, a Jewish philosopher who runs an orthodox seminary in Jerusalem.

Historically, Yom Kippur has also been an occasion for Jewish unity. But it is in scant evidence these days.

Two Cultures: A science fiction

Have scientists created a new literary genre? No, in reality art has long been dominated by science

By Bryan Appleyard

"WHEN I find myself in the company of scientists," wrote WH Auden, "I feel like a shabby curate who has strayed by mistake into a drawing room full of dukes."

The Two Cultures are with us, apparently, for ever. Since the phrase first appeared in 1962 with the row between FR Leavis and CP Snow (Why all the initials? Fear of an excess of intimacy?) the idea that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the grand dukes of science and the shabby curates of the arts has been more or less fixed. Art seems too vapidly vague for the scientists; science seems too coldly precise for the artists. Artists resent scientists for really changing the world; scientists despise artists for pretending to do so. And so on. The culture is riven, balkanised by competitive ignorance.

Now John Carey, Merton Professor of English at Oxford, has intervened in the conflict. As editor of the *Faber Book of Science*, which was published last week, he asserts that the best of modern scientific popularisers — Richard Dawkins, Stephen Hawking, Stephen Jay Gould and so on — have created a new kind of late-20th century literature, one that demands to be recognised as a separate genre, distinct from the old literary forms, and conveying pleasures and triumphs quite distinct from theirs.

This is either a very small claim or a very big one. Of course, popular science is a separate genre; of course, it offers different delights from a Jacobean verse drama — to say this much is to say very little. But I assume Carey intends the claim to be a big one. In this case he is saying that popular science writing is literature in the grandest sense of the word, which is to say that it is enduring, important and, in an artistic as opposed to merely scientific sense, true. We remember, for example, Jonathan Swift because his genius expanded his work beyond its local preoccupations to realise a

lasting truth: we shall remember Richard Dawkins — Carey calls his book *The Blind Watchmaker* a masterpiece — because he has the literary gift to universalise a highly specific experience.

Carey's big claim is, of course, completely wrong, but interestingly so. This popular science is not major literature, though it is, sporadically, very well written. Dawkins is lucid and has a writer's flair for the dramatic. Stephen Jay Gould is graceful and vivid, and there are a number of other scientists in Carey's anthology who fully deserve the classification "writer." Furthermore, it is true that this kind of writing does seem to have taken off in recent years. There are big popular science sections in all bookshops and scientists seem to be falling over each other to explain themselves to the lay masses. Perhaps they are idealists, though, it has to be said, the flow of books did increase dramatically once it became clear what kind of money Stephen Hawking was making out of *A Brief History of Time*. But, never mind the motive, a genre has, unquestionably, emerged.

In Carey's eyes this genre is the literature science has been waiting for. He makes the familiar *Two Cultures* point that, almost from the beginning, art has either studiously ignored or pompously abused science. From Milton onwards, poets have trashed science as a deficient, soulless, destructive way of knowing the world. Coleridge said that Shakespeare was worth 500 Isaac Newtons. The very nature of the scientific project and of the scientific imagination condemns scientists always to come second in the race for greatness.

As a result, claims Carey, with only a few exceptions poetry has remained "science-blind." Now, at last, scientists are doing the job the poets ought to have been doing for the past 400 years — knowledgeably celebrating science in literature.

Now Carey, at one point, does ask himself why poets might have adopted this



Are writers such as Stephen Hawking celebrating science as Shakespeare did?

haughty posture towards science. But he answers himself merely by speculating that "it is assumed that the poetic imagination is superior to the scientific." That is to do little more than repeat the question.

What Carey should have noted was the paranoia of Coleridge or any number of other writers who have sneered at science. This is not a real sense of superiority; it is a fear, obsession. The poets know their enemy and they cannot take their eye off him. Whatever writers may have been saying about the inferiority and irrelevance of science, for the past 400 years science has, in fact, been their primary subject matter.

Madame Bovary is, to a large extent, about science. William Blake is about science, thousands of pages of Victorian novels are about science. In our own day, Martin Amis's novels have become increasingly fixated on science: less obviously, the poetry of John Ashbery is about science, and, equally obliquely though no less certainly, Samuel Beckett is about science. They write about science not in the explicit sense of describing experiments or theories, but in a more fundamental sense. They write about the world as they find it, and what they find is a world in which the dominant power and faith is science. Not, in

some way, to write about science may be impossible, and it would certainly be dishonest.

This is not what either of the Two Cultures wants to hear. The artist wants to hear the soothing assurance that his concerns are bigger and better than those of the scientist. The scientist wants to see science celebrated from within — as a supremely effective and beneficent expertise guarded by the specialist language of mathematics and selectively explained by a few gifted popularisers. What neither wants to be told is that science is all around us, it can neither be ignored by aesthetes nor controlled by a few arrogant practitioners who happen to have a talent for writing.

Carey does go so far as to admit that Martin Amis writes about science, comparing his book *Einstein's Monsters* with Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker*. But he concludes: "From the viewpoint of late-20th-century thought, Dawkins's book represents the instructed and Amis's the uninstructed imagination." This is trivial. Amis knows as much about science as Dawkins, he just knows different things. Dawkins knows the workings of science as a system; Amis knows it as a potent, complex force in the world and in his imagination. Both

forms of knowing are appropriate, but the latter is more difficult. Some scientists can, of course, do both; Dawkins, as it happens, can't.

This explains why English teachers need not be too troubled about Carey's insistence that modern popular science is an important addition to their curriculum. Art is about the accomplishment of the most difficult and significant task; and that, in our time, is predominantly the attempt to square the demands and capacity of science with those of the human imagination. The vast majority of these popularisers are merely vividly explaining science from within; they cannot, therefore, claim to be producing literature in the grand sense any more than Martin Amis can claim to be advancing quantum theory.

Maybe this is to admit that there really are two cultures. But I don't think so. I think there is one culture dominated by science and defined by different attitudes to science. There are dukes and there are curates, but they are all in the same drawing room.

'The Faber Book of Science,' edited by John Carey (Faber & Faber, £17.50). The above article is reprinted from the Independent.

Turkish tremor deaths rise

(Continued from page 1)

day despite a series of small tremors — often a warning of a larger shock to come — during the previous week.

They also confirmed that these same local authorities failed to distribute enough tents to residents whose homes were damaged or destroyed, leaving thousands of people without shelter.

"Thursday, the day after the second tremor, which measured 4.8, we were told to return to our homes," said Ibrahim Aygunduz, who had fled to the outskirts of the city along with thousands of other Dinar residents. City officials "told us the 4.8 tremor would be the biggest, and that only weaker ones would follow."

The mayor, Yener Emek-siz, had personally announced over the weekend that he would be sleeping at home.

Banks, political parties, municipal bodies from around the country and various professional groupings have begun campaigns to raise money for Dinar residents.

The ports union, Liman-15, broke its own strike to reopen the Mediterranean port of Antalya in the neighbouring province to allow the shipment of aid material to Dinar.

Hundreds of residents, still in shock and looking bewildered, spent a cold night in tents or in stables.

Bosnia peace bid is jolted

(Continued from page 1)

pected by early November but depended on a peace agreement for Bosnia.

Mr. Holbrooke, who spent Monday talking to the Bosnian government in Sarajevo, was heading for fresh talks on Tuesday with Mr. Milosevic in Belgrade.

"We're talking not only about the ceasefire... we're also talking about what hap-

pens after the war ends, with political arrangements being the number one subject," Mr. Holbrooke said.

"We're discussing the question of elections, governmental structure, trying to fill in the many blanks on the canvas of what the country of Bosnia-Herzegovina will look like after the peace."

Joint projects

(Continued from page 12)

the implementation of joint development projects with Arab states, particularly in the energy sector.

He spoke of plans for linking Israeli, Egyptian and Jordanian electricity grids with prospects in the future of extending this to Syria, Lebanon and eventually Iraq.

Mr. Amos noted too the possibilities of building oil

and gas pipelines from the Gulf Arab states to terminals on Israel's Mediterranean coast, opening up new conduits to Europe.

He said a plan is also being studied for a major hydroelectric project based on joining the Dead Sea, situated below sea level along the Israeli-Jordan border, to the Red Sea by a 230-kilometre canal.

Rabin assured of Knesset vote

(Continued from page 1)

nian prisoners at the end of this week.

"The first group may be released on Thursday afternoon or on Friday morning," said Sufyan Abu Zaidah, a member of the Palestinian National Authority administering self-ruled Gaza and Jericho.

Mr. Abu Zaidah said more than 1,000 of the 5,300 Palestinians held by Israel would be released in the first stage, which according to the deal reached last week, was to take place "on the signing of the agreement."

Prisoners are one of the most sensitive issues in Israel-PLO peace moves.

Palestinians want Israel to free all remaining prisoners while the Jewish state has vowed not to release Palestinians convicted of killing or seriously wounding Israelis.

The accord says all women prisoners will be freed in the first stage of the release. But Israeli President Ezer Weizman, who must sign the pardons for some women, is resisting the demand.

Mr. Weizman said he would announce his decision after the vote in parliament.

Mr. Abu Zaidah, who visited Palestinians in two Israeli jails on Monday, said most prisoners were disappointed no agreement was reached on the release of all Palestinian inmates.

The Israeli army plans to withdraw most of its forces from six of seven West Bank towns by Dec. 30, a senior military official said.

"The Israeli army will do everything possible to finish its redeployment by Dec. 30, 1995, in all the towns except Hebron, where it will not be completed until March," General Uzi Dayan told reporters.

According to the general, the redeployment will begin in the northern West Bank town of Jenin and be com-

pleted there by mid-November.

The withdrawal is to start by Feb. 11 and wind up on March 30, clearing the way for Palestinian elections to a self-rule council.

The Israeli military administration will begin to move out of its offices in 12 Palestinian West Bank villages in eight days, Mr. Peres said Saturday.

Unlike the six other West Bank towns, from which the army is to withdraw in full, Israeli troops are to make only a partial pullback from Hebron to protect the 400 settlers who live among 120,000 Palestinians.

But the army is to reopen some roads in the town, the central market and the bus station.

On Tuesday, Jewish settlers broke into a Hebron girls' school over the raising of a Palestinian flag and scuffled with parents and neighbours in the town, Palestinians said.

They said no one was injured. About 50 settlers, including women and children, broke into the Gordoba school under police protection and assaulted the principal and some of the girl students, they said.

Some settlers climbed rooftops and stoned Palestinian houses, smashing several windows. They threw eggs at the director of Palestinian education who arrived to inspect the school, Palestinians said.

Relatives of the students and neighbours rushed to fend off the settlers. Israeli security forces intervened. Witnesses said police detained one Palestinian youth and beat him up while a settler managed to flee arrest.

Settlers want Palestinians to refrain from raising the Palestinian flag over the school opposite a settler

stronghold in Hebron.

Mr. Rabin said Monday that the Palestinian self-rule enclave of Jericho would grow by six to seven square kilometres under the autonomy agreement.

Mr. Rabin said, during a cabinet meeting, that in signing the accord in May 1994 on the first phase of autonomy, Israel had already agreed to expand the West Bank enclave, an official said.

He said that Jericho, which currently covers 62 square kilometres, would only grow by 10 per cent, adding that the extension did not threaten the Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley.

Israeli settlers in the valley increased their protests in recent days against the Jericho expansion.

Settlers planted flags on Jordanian land after breaking out of the West Bank and wading across the Jordan River on Monday to protest against Palestinian self-rule.

Mr. Rabin also said that the removal of calls for Israel's destruction from the PLO charter would be a key test of the agreement with the Palestinians, a spokeswoman said.

Mr. Arafat has undertaken to have the Palestinian parliament amend the charter within two months of its election.

Mr. Rabin's comments came during a meeting with Labour Party lawmakers called to consolidate support for the autonomy accord.

Mr. Arafat promised to amend the charter when Israel and the PLO signed their peace accord in September 1993, and his failure to make good on this pledge has fuelled right-wing Israeli criticism of Mr. Rabin's peace policies.

Mr. Rabin's spokeswoman, Aliza Goren, confirmed the premier told Labour members that he saw Mr. Arafat's ability to revoke the clauses as "an important test of the agreement."

Economy

EU, Egypt resume talks on association agreement

CAIRO (R) — Egypt and the European Union began at least five days of talks on Tuesday on details of a free trade association agreement which will replace the cooperation agreement in force since the 1970s.

Five groups of experts will discuss competitiveness, agricultural regimes, processed agricultural products, intellectual property and customs and rules of origin in advance of full negotiations in Brussels later this month.

The EU is proposing a 12-year transition to free trade with Egypt, which re-

tains substantial tariff barriers to manufactured imports despite recent trade liberalisation.

Under the old cooperation agreement, the only remaining restrictions on Egyptian exports to the EU have been on cotton yarn and cloth, where Egypt exercises voluntary restraint, and on oranges, where Egypt exceeds a duty-free quota.

But the Egyptian government and some industrialists see free trade with Europe as the best way to make the country more competitive and catch up with other Mid-

dle East countries which have already gone further along the same path.

"The old agreement hasn't worked. Egyptian exports to the EU have been stable at about \$1 billion a year for four or five years, once you extract the oil," a European diplomat said.

"The other incentive for Egypt is that the terms of trade are changing all around them, especially with the new GATT, and they can't remain indifferent," he added.

At the end of the last pull round of negotiations in

Brussels in July, a European Commission official said he thought the talks would finish by the end of October but European officials in Cairo said this was wildly optimistic.

"I expect it will take three to four years," said one.

The negotiations have provoked a lively debate in the Egyptian press and some commentators have complained that the draft agreement, under discussion favours the Europeans.

But the EU is unwilling to make radical changes in the

draft because it does not want the agreement with Egypt to vary much from those it has reached with Israel and Tunisia.

The EU representative in Egypt, Michael McGeever, said that in the discussions this week the experts would study the implications of the draft agreement in each of the five areas.

"It's an exploratory phase and these are areas they would like to get their teeth into. Then they will be able to see the consequences," he told Reuters.

Oman seeks investment to develop first coal mine

DUBAI (R) — Oman is seeking foreign and local investors to develop its first coal mine in a project estimated to cost more than \$36 million, officials said on Tuesday.

Oman is developing its coal resources with the aim of becoming the first Gulf Arab state to use coal as a domestic energy source and is also considering exporting it.

A small oil producer compared to others in the region, Oman had made development of its minerals and metals a priority in diversifying and privatising the economy and is seeking foreign investment to exploit gold, uranium and copper.

A Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals official said Oman on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 would present a pre-feasibility study to interested companies to develop its first coal field.

"We are inviting foreign and local investors," the official told Reuters. "We have already distributed the study to some government agencies, and we are asking interested companies, consumers and investors to prepare a formula."

A summary of the study, prepared by the British firm Wardle Armstrong, said the Al Kamil coal field in Oman's eastern region contained an estimated 112 million tonnes

of coal.

Geological and engineering studies confirmed 19 to 22 million tonnes of coal was recoverable at 120 to 150 metres, said the summary obtained by Reuters.

This would support a mine with about 535,000 tonnes per year capacity over 35 years, it said.

"We have much more coal in the ground which has not yet been proven and studied," the ministry official said.

Capital needs were put at \$32.2 million and total capital, costs, and interest would run to \$36.7 million, the study said.

The summary said it "indi-

cates that Oman's coalfield could be exploited profitably. The study shows commercial opportunity to establish a surface mine to export coal to cement plants or to use it for power generation."

One is to export it, which would require expanding port and ship-loading facilities, the summary said. It is also considering using it at two power and water sites to meet growing demand, especially in the country's eastern region.

Omani officials have said that the country's relatively small minerals and metals industry could help it diversify away from oil, currently produced at 800,000 barrels per

day.

Industry sources also told Reuters that Oman Mining Co. officials were looking for potential buyers in South Africa and Japan when it privatises its gold and copper mines this year.

They said Consultants KPMG Peat Marwick were due this year to recommend the size of the stake Oman should offer.

The Gulf Arab state produces half a tonne of gold a year, far less than the \$50 tonnes per year extracted by companies in South Africa, the world's biggest producer, and is looking to develop two copper sites.

Dollar buoyed by G-7 hopes

LONDON (R) — The dollar was buoyed on Tuesday as markets anticipated that leading industrial countries may throw their weight behind recent moves to strengthen the U.S. currency at a meeting on Saturday.

Trading, although thin, kept the dollar above 100.5 yen level, well above the levels of last week when a roller-coaster ride left the currency just above 99 yen on Friday.

European stocks made a lacklustre start, depressed by a sharp drop in Wall Street on Monday, but London and Paris shares perked up later to show some gains. Frankfurt was closed because of the Unity Day holiday.

Currency traders expected little fresh action ahead of important U.S. employment figures due out on Friday and the weekend Group of Seven (G7) meeting of industrialised nations.

"It's certainly quiet and I can't see much happening," said Carlo Galazzi, Forex

manager at Nikko Bank in London. "I think we will consolidate around 100 (yen) as we go towards G7 at the weekend."

The exception was the Swiss franc which continued its relentless march up to 1.1475 per dollar from Monday's 1.1497.

Rumours overnight, later denied, that Fuji Bank had suffered huge losses in currency trading helped underpin the dollar against the yen.

The reports showed the market was nervous about further problems for Japanese banks, traders said.

Officials of the G7 — which includes the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Canada and Britain — will gather in Washington during the 50th annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

They will do some tough talking on the dollar and back it up with intervention to buy the U.S. currency should it

start to slide, traders believe.

The general feeling was that while the officials would like to see the dollar still higher, they are probably not too unhappy with current levels.

"The one-way bet is on dollar-yen if you have the stomach for it and are relaxed about dips on the way up," said ABN-AMRO economist Tony Norfield.

In London, Europe's biggest stock market, shares edged up in thin trading, weighed down initially by the overnight falls in New York.

"Things are tending to drift," one trader said. "I don't think we'll see a sharp setback, buying support is still there."

But the negative sentiment was dispelled later by gains from British Airways shares and takeover speculation primarily in electricity and water industries.

French shares too made gains, after an uneasy start, unsettled by Wall Street.

Israel oil imports to grow 5% a year

LIMASSOL, Cyprus (R) — Israel's oil imports will rise by five per cent a year because of new road building, higher vehicle usage and poor energy efficiency, an Israeli energy consultant said on Tuesday.

The increase in Israel's crude oil imports is more than double demand forecasts for OECD states and is more typical of consumption growth seen in the expanding economies of Asia.

"The number of vehicles (in Israel) will grow in a frightening way in the next few years," Amos Ron, president of Haifa-based Consultants Ronatzen told delegates at an energy conference here.

Increased gasoline consumption was expected because of the construction of new roads from Israel to the Egyptian and Jordanian borders and a new north-south carriageway in Israel, Mr. Ron said.

The country's energy efficiency had to be improved to limit the growing need for imported oil and petroleum products.

"Israel is not on the front line of energy efficiency and we must do something about it," Mr. Ron said.

Israel imported 12.5 million tonnes of crude oil last year from the international spot market and through a supply contract with the Egyptian government.

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Sudan acts to stop pound falling

KHARTOUM (R) — The Sudanese government, under public pressure to stop the Sudanese pound falling against the dollar, has restricted public-sector access to hard currency bought by the newly opened exchange houses.

The official news agency SUNA said on Tuesday that under a decree issued by acting Finance Minister Abdel Wahhab Ahmad Hamza, public-sector institutions can buy from the exchange houses only with permission from his ministry.

The institutions — ministries, corporations and public-sector companies — must also withdraw any out-

standing applications for hard currency they have submitted to the exchange houses, it said.

The decree will naturally cut demand for hard currency in the exchange houses, where the value of the pound has fallen in two weeks to 800 to the dollar from 680 to the dollar.

But it will also add to demand in the banks, which rely mainly on scarce public-sector foreign currency receipts.

The fall of the pound has put the exchange houses in the spotlight and trade unionists, arguing that they contribute to inflation, have asked

the government to close them down.

But Mr. Hamza said the government would let the exchange houses continue to operate and even expand.

Since they opened earlier this year, the volume of trade in the exchange houses has risen to \$1.5 million a day from \$88,000 a day at first, he said.

He said the exchange houses could attract capital from abroad and eventually help to stabilise the exchange rate.

The exchange houses buy dollars at rates about seven per cent more attractive than those on offer in the banks.

Gulf reserves sharply up, bank foreign assets down

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The external financial reserves of six Gulf Arab oil producers jumped by more than 20 per cent in 1995 while the foreign assets of their commercial banks declined, a bank report showed on Tuesday.

International liquidity of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stood at \$23.9 billion in June compared with \$18.2 billion in June 1994, the Arab Banking Corporation (ABC) said in its monthly bulletin.

The increase was mainly due to a sharp rise in Saudi Arabia's reserves to \$9.4 billion from \$5.2 billion. This compares with more than \$20 billion during the oil boom of the early 1980s.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil producer and exporter, was forced to withdraw from those reserves and other overseas investment to finance a large budget deficit caused by a decline in crude prices.

Kuwait, which is recovering from the 1990 Iraqi invasion, recorded a slight drop in its financial reserves to \$3.89 billion from \$4.09 billion,

according to the Manama-based ABC.

The reserves of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) increased to \$7.6 billion from \$6.02 billion and those by the remaining GCC members — Bahrain, Oman and Qatar — registered a small growth.

The report about the economies of the 22-member Arab League showed net foreign assets by the GCC's nearly 120 commercial banks declined to \$39.5 billion in March from \$34.8 billion in March 1994.

Saudi Arabia was also to blame for the fall, with its assets going down to around \$13.7 billion from \$16.7 billion. Bankers said this was because Saudi commercial banks were repatriating part of their overseas investments to face growing demand for loans at home.

The UAE's bank foreign assets also fell to \$8.6 billion from \$10.7 billion while Kuwait's rose to \$3.4 billion from \$3.1 billion. The other three members recorded slight increases in assets.

ABC, controlled by the governments of Libya,

Kuwait and the UAE, put the GCC's debt at \$46.8 billion at the end of 1993 compared with around \$44 billion at the end of 1992. It gave no figures for the following years.

Inflation rates in the first quarter of 1995 were 5.1 per cent in Saudi Arabia, 5.0 per cent in the UAE, 1.0 per cent in Kuwait, 0.9 per cent in Bahrain, 3.0 per cent in Qatar and -0.9 per cent in Oman.

Compared with the 1994, Bahrain and Oman were the only members that reported lower inflation rates in 1995.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Astrological Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Don't listen to what a home tie has to say about an outside partner. A situation arises today which makes it important to keep promises.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Keep busy at regular activities and become more efficient at them today, but do not have a disagreement with a partner. Avoid wasting time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Concentrate on pleasure which will not be too expensive today and you can be just as happy. Get at creative activities you like.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) It is important you take care of the needs of kin and forget personal desires for the time being. Show you are a good host towards your special guests.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't permit a private concern to stop you today from accomplishing a good deal in the world of activity. Listen to the ideas of partners.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't permit one today who has little to do to keep you from important business dealings. Forget personal aims at this time.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You are tempted today to make comments which are unlike your cooperative self, so refrain from doing so or there could be some concerns.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You may feel restricted in some way today, but the fog soon lifts and you are your happy self again. Don't go off on tangents which are unimportant.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Steer clear of that business melee and spend as much time today as you can with good and kind friends in some pleasing activities.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Concentrate on handling worldly and public affairs well today and avoid an irritable partner. Settle credit matters for your benefit.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have a brilliant idea today which should be put in operation quickly, so don't waste time with the humdrum which could be present.

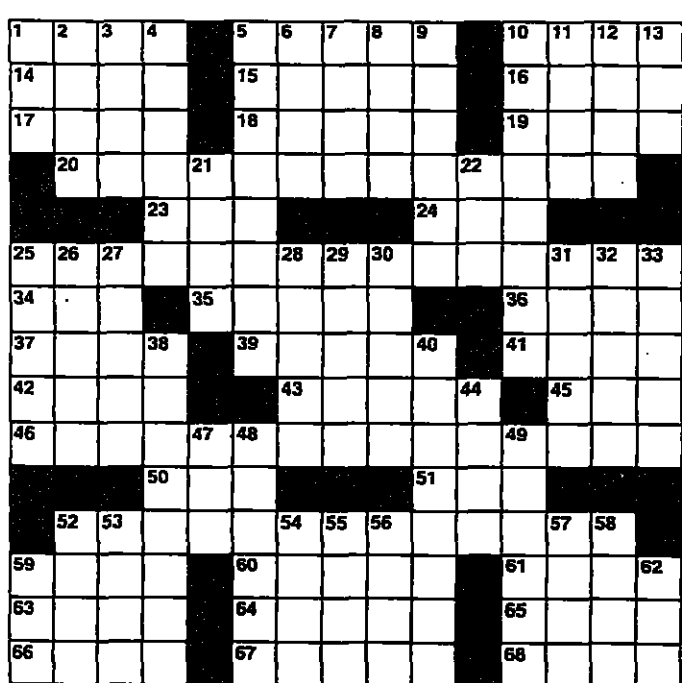
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Make your environment more charming and comfortable today so that duties which you participate in will be easier in the future.

Birthstone of October: Opal — Tourmaline

Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

THE Daily Crossword by Betty Jorgensen

- ACROSS**
- Mansard, e.g.
 - Kiel, e.g.
 - Forearm bone
 - Vain
 - Bouquet
 - Stirring
 - Reverse, for one
 - Poe's bird
 - Author Grey
 - Start of a quip
 - English river
 - Intuitive letters
 - More of quip
 - Biddy
 - Goddess of agriculture
 - Author Ferber
 - Quiche need
 - Dashboard components
 - Tetched
 - In — of
 - Webber musical
 - Once called
 - More of quip
 - Young seal
 - Flight formation: abbr.
 - End of quip
 - Stylish
 - Gullible
 - Hideout
 - Slangy negative
 - Out-and-out
 - Therefore
 - Signals
 - agreement
 - Schemes
 - Monthly payment
 - Fit out
 - Concert halls
 - Patron saint of Norway
 - Search about
 - Went at top speed
 - Inland sea
 - Scotia
 - Church corner
 - Surgical instrument
 - Opened
 - Meadowlands

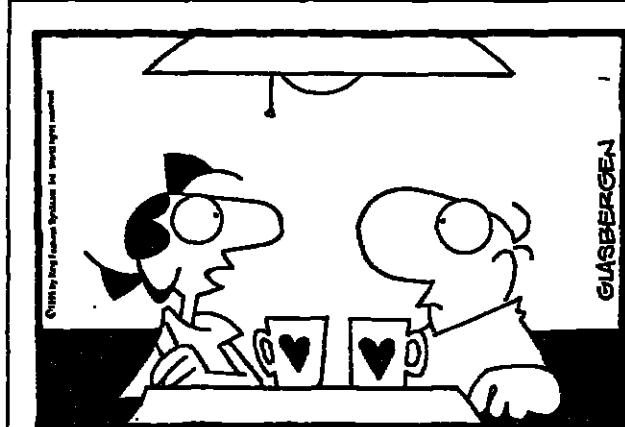


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Yesterday's puzzle solved:

DAME ADLAI SINS
UVEA DROPS OREO
MERRY MONTH OF MAY
PRESSING RIATA
ERE LAMA
COHERE SOSO AGO
ATEN APAIL GUA
THEGUNS OF AUGUST
TED TACOS SATE
YRS TOOK REASON
REST SEC
BRIER EMACIATE
ROSES IN DECEMBER
OTIS MEN AT ALSO
ZONE PEARS NISS

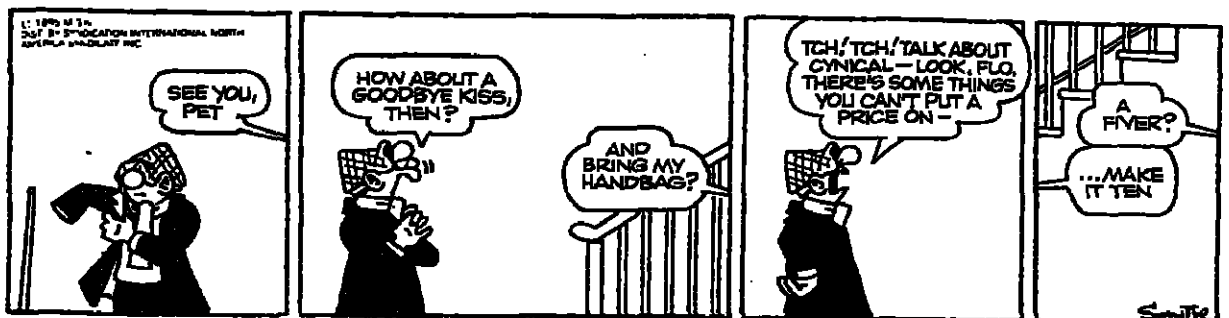
- Tafts' territory
- Tied
- Peel
- Curtail
- Certain league: abbr.
- Street indicator
- Pocket bread
- Tin
- Malarkey!



Peanuts



Andy Cap



Mutt'n'Jeff



falling

entment to close them

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debt at \$4.5 billion at

end of 1994, compared

with \$4 billion at the

1992. It gave no fi-

gure for the following

years, but rates in the

first 10 years were 5.1

per cent, 5.0 per cent

in 1991, 4.0 per cent

in 1992, 3.0 per cent

in 1993, 2.0 per cent

in 1994, 1.0 per cent

in 1995, 0.5 per cent

in 1996, 0.5 per cent

business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

A lake for Ajloun

Ajloun Municipality is contemplating launching an artificial lake project in the Ein Quneitra area, Mayor Mohammad Smadi said. Mr. Smadi said the municipality conducted a study on the project which aims to encourage tourism and sports, mainly canoeing. He said the planned lake will be seven-metre deep and will stretch over an area of 90,000 square metres. He added that the envisaged project will entail constructing chalets, a small hotel, playgrounds, parks and a rest house. Mr. Smadi said the project might be linked to Ajloun's main tourist attraction, the Ajloun citadel, which was formerly known as Al Rabadh Castle, with 35-passenger cable cars. The mayor said feasibility studies on the project showed that it will cover its costs within five years. Speaking in an interview with Al Ra'i newspaper, Mr. Smadi said the Ministry of Tourism donated JD 15,000 to the municipality as a contribution to another tourism project which entails maintaining the town's streets, lighting the street between the town and the citadel and placing wooden benches on the road. He said the project is expected to cost JD 160,000. The mayor complained the Ajloun Municipality was suffering severe financial problems and called on the government to support it. He said the municipality's 1995 budget stands at JD 373,884, while the budget deficit stands at JD 159,000. (Al Ra'i)

* The Customs Department started on Monday collecting 10 per cent sales tax instead of the former seven per cent after the new sales tax law came into effect. Department Director Naumi Abdullah said the increase in the tax is expected to raise the treasury's sales tax revenues by JD 35 million annually. (Al Ra'i)

* The number of cheques that bounced during the first seven months of this year totalled 263,800, worth JD 238.1 million, compared to 235,900 cheques worth JD 204.4 million during the same period of 1994. (Al Ra'i)

* The Jordanian Exporters Society will take part in an international trade fair which will be held in Ethiopia Nov. 24-Dec. 3. The participation in the fair, "Ethiopia: Towards the year 2000," aims to acquaint Jordanian exporters with the Ethiopian market, and to increase trade exchange between Jordan and this African country. (Al Ra'i)

* Director of the Zarqa Agriculture Department Mohammad Ghuweiri said there are more than one million dunums of arable lands in the Zarqa Governorate. He said 33 per cent of the Kingdom's poultry farms and 40 per cent of the cattle wealth are in Zarqa Governorate. (Al Ra'i)

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Alumnus gives university \$55m

BALTIMORE (AP) — A 1964 graduate of Johns Hopkins University has remembered his alma mater with a \$55 million gift — the largest in university history.

Michael R. Bloomberg, founder and owner of Bloomberg Financial Markets, a New York-based financial information company, gave the money to be divided among the university's eight schools and library, Johns Hopkins announced Monday.

Some of the money will go towards a cancer treatment centre and a cancer research building. Part will go towards increasing the school's en-

dowment. The rest will go towards capital projects, such as renovating the library and constructing campus buildings.

"I'm personally improving the world and people's lives with my gift," Mr. Bloomberg said. "What better thing could I do? How better can I repay society for all the opportunities I've had?"

Mr. Bloomberg, 53, is the chair-elect of the university's board of trustees. He previously gave the university \$8 million, which went in part towards constructing the Bloomberg Centre for Physics and Astronomy.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States and the European Union would rather discuss establishing an "economic space" than a free trade area, a senior U.S. Commerce Department official indicated Monday.

"Both sides hesitate to talk about free trade areas," said Charles Meissner, assistant secretary for international economic policy at the Commerce Department.

His comments came after the 15-member European Union, meeting in Luxembourg, called for improved ties with the United States, but failed to endorse propos-

'EU, U.S. would rather discuss economic space than free trade'

als to examine a possible trans-Atlantic free trade zone and reexamine tariffs.

"We have, for all practical purposes, free trade in manufacturing," except for a very few areas, Mr. Meissner said.

Tariffs between the two economic giants were very low and the depreciation of the dollar against the German mark had "dissipated the importance of tariffs elsewhere in terms of foreign exchange," he said.

But both sides wanted to discuss setting up an "economic space," all the more so because of the absence of an official economic pact such as

those existing between the United States and Asia and the United States and its immediate neighbours, Canada and Mexico.

"This is an anomaly. Agriculture is the hang up, and we all know that," Mr. Meissner told AFP.

The introduction of free trade in farm products could not be realised without a radical overhaul of the EU's system of subsidising farm output under the common agricultural policy, which would be hugely controversial with countries such as

France, Spain and Italy.

U.S. and European businessmen will meet in Seville, Spain, on November 10 and 11 to draw up agenda proposals for the December 3 U.S.-European Union summit in Madrid on closer economic cooperation, Mr. Meissner said.

Some 100 to 140 company chairmen from both sides of the Atlantic are to meet to discuss issues of concern, notably standards and certification and trade liberalisation.

Earlier, European trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brit-

tan said in Luxembourg that an action plan to reassess the U.S.-EU relationship ahead of the December summit had been "broadly and warmly welcomed" by European leaders.

"But areas of controversy remain," he said. Foreign ministers had split over two suggestions, the first to carry out a joint EU-U.S. study on the possibility of a free trade zone, the second to examine an acceleration or extension of tariff reductions already agreed during the Uruguay round.

Dubai to have biggest world duty free shop

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AFP) — The Gulf emirate of Dubai is planning to expand the duty free shop at its international airport to become the biggest of its kind in the world, an official told Al Shurug magazine on Monday.

The project is past of overall expansions at the airport to face a sharp growth in business caused by an economic upswing and the influx of visitors from the former Soviet Union and East Europe. Anita Mahra, marketing director at the duty free shop, told Al Shurug.

The first phase of expansion at the airport will cost around 750 million dirhams (\$204.3 million) and will enable the airport to handle a

projected 10 million passengers in the year 2000.

From 3,000 square metres, the expansion will treble the area of the duty free shop in two years.

"This will make it the biggest duty free market in the world in terms of area. The expansion also covers the number of shops and items, which now exceed 60,000," Ms. Mahra said.

Growing traffic at the Dubai airport has sharply boosted business at the duty free shop since it was opened 10 years ago. From around 75 million dirhams (\$20.4 million) in 1985, its sales exceeded 348 million dirhams (\$94.8 million) in the first seven months of 1995 and is expected to reach nearly 500 million dirhams (\$136.2 million) by the end of the year.

Georgia imposes new currency

TBILISI (AFP) — Georgia's shops opened for business with new labels on all merchandise Monday, as the country's new currency, the lari, became the only legal means of exchange.

The lari was introduced on Sept. 26 to replace Georgia's temporary currency, the coupon, but Georgians were given until Oct. 2 to switch over to the new money.

For most residents in the former Soviet republic, the switch has not been from coupons to lari, but from Russian rubles to lari.

Although their own currency had been stable for a year since a successful austerity drive, Georgians con-

tinued to use Russian rubles rather than their own coupons.

Now the government has promised fines for people who do not switch to lari.

Authorities say that the new, legitimate currency will help clear up tax-collection problems. Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze has promised that increased revenues will allow a hike in salaries to coincide roughly with elections in November, in which he is the clear favourite.

The new currency is worth one million of the old coupons, or about \$0.77. The first currency auction of the lari will also be held Monday.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JERUSALEM				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 03/10/1995				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	920	229120	247,000	248,000
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	12189	4,440	4,440	4,430
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	29300	10500	1,500	3,500
JORDAN GULF BANK	1100	38122	1,270	1,290
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	132	2620	2,400	2,360
SOUTHERN BANK	6792	2025	2,770	2,770
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	5818	8200	1,300	1,200
BEIT ELAHL SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	6000	21715	3,730	3,730
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	3559	20920	3,500	3,400
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	1250	13979	3,770	3,740
	74250	4194	3,310	3,300
	10350	69954	9,650	9,500
	207064	16516	1,570	1,580
BANKS SECTOR				
JORDAN POSTAL BANK	200	542	2,700	2,710
HOLY LAND INSURANCE	250	555	2,300	2,320
THE NATIONAL AELIA INSURANCE	1000	3000	3,000	3,000
INSURANCE SECTOR				
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	35850	59361	1,650	1,650
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	100	590	5,000	5,900
NATIONAL POSTAL SECURITIES	7050	14421	2,040	2,040
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	2775	3001	1,080	1,080
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / ALRAI	100	985	9,800	9,800
JORDAN PRESS & PUBLISHING / AD-DUSTOUR	1000	7600	7,500	7,600
AMMAN PRESS FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	2250	7195	3,200	3,180
AMMAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1200	1749	1,310	1,330
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP	5450	5798	1,080	1,080
SERVICES SECTOR				
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	9712	34979	3,610	3,600
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	1423	4295	3,020	3,020
THE ARAB POSTAL	200	986	4,930	4,930
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	16200	155400	9,500	9,500
WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	250	368	1,400	1,470
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	112	367	3,310	3,280
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCK MILLS	250	1875	7,450	7,500
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	6538	31246	4,870	4,860
JORDAN DAIRY	261	251	2,450	2,450
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	500	1250	2,500	2,520
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	1250	9125	7,250	7,300
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	1817	2537	1,420	1,420
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	220216	161081	720	730
ARAB INDUSTRIES	20600	29947	1,430	1,450
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	9043	9901	1,090	1,100
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	1250	4043	3,200	3,200
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	3980	5517	1,410	1,390
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	9600	30322	3,150	3,190
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	34000	68764	1,960	2,010
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	500	1420	1,640	1,640
	25350	36185	1,420	1,420
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR				
	363968	596864	INDEX NUMBER: 124.67	
GRAND TOTAL				
	628294	1224985	INDEX NUMBER: 161.03	
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 266075				
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 282535				

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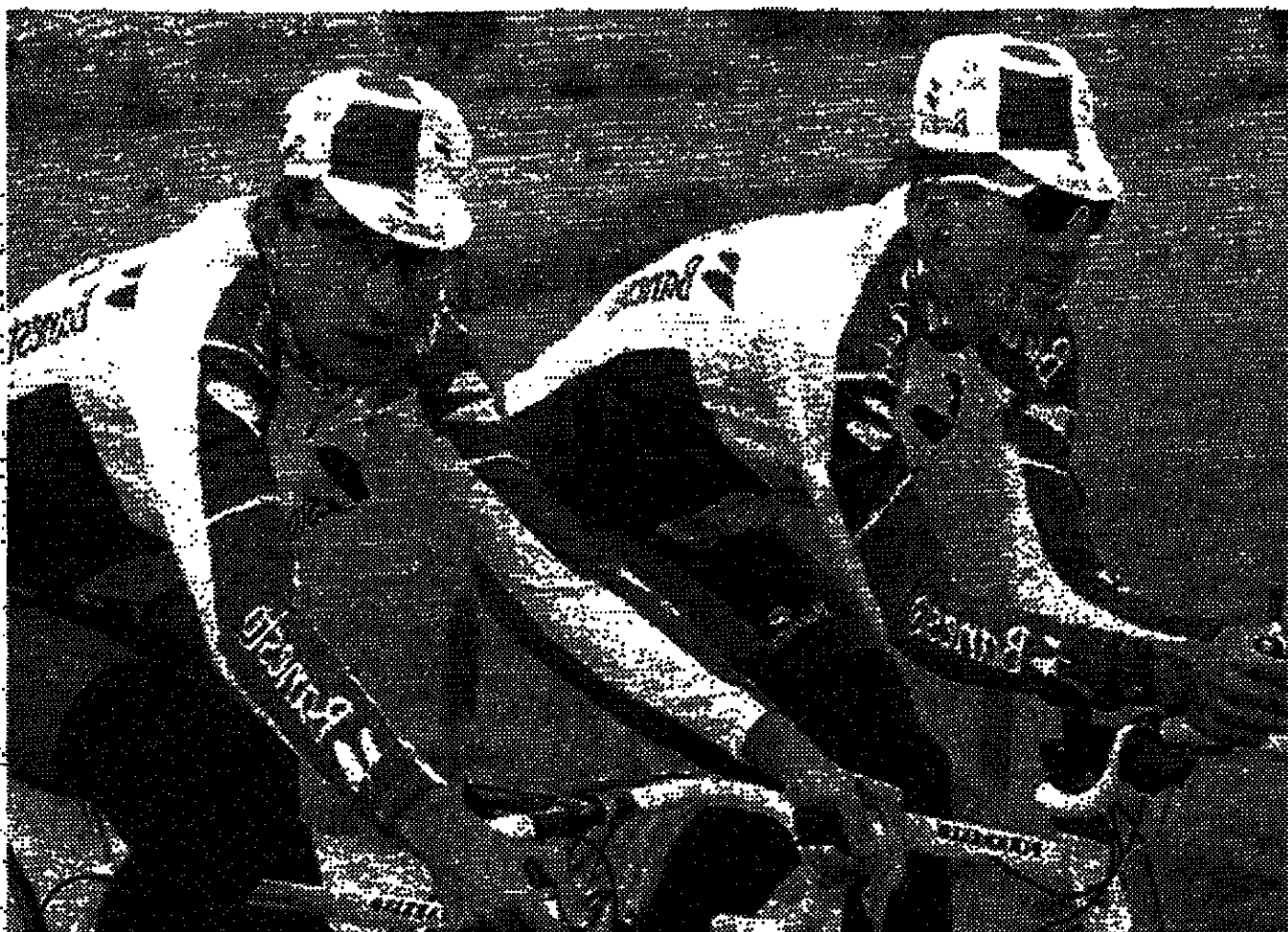
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Five-time Tour de France winner Miguel Indurain of Spain (R) and Spanish team-mate Marino Alonso train on the World Championship individual time-trial course between Paipa and Tunja October 2. Indurain is one of the favourites for the race (Reuters photo)

Indurain aims for elusive world title

TUNJA, Colombia (R) — Miguel Indurain, five times Tour de France champion, Wednesday takes the first of two more shots at winning an elusive World Cycling Championship title.

The Spaniard, who thrives in the longer stage races, starts in Wednesday's time-trial and in Sunday's more prestigious road race.

Despite his dominance of the Tour de France, the closest Indurain has ever come to winning a world title was two years ago in Norway when he was runner-up in

the road race behind American Lance Armstrong.

This time he is one of several serious contenders in events whose outcome is unpredictable because of the high altitude of the courses, around 2,600 metres above sea level.

Indurain told reporters he expected victory to go to the rider who could adapt best to the high altitude.

"Tactics will be the least important aspect at this world championship," he said. "In this competition there are no favourites.

Everyone is an unknown quantity."

Other leading contenders include Italy's Claudio Chiappucci, runner-up last year in Sicily behind Frenchman Luc Leblanc, and Lithuania's Arturas Kasputis. But enthusiastic home fans have high hopes of celebrating a first Colombian victory.

Colombian riders have enjoyed success in major events, especially in the mountain stages of tours, and they are used to competing at high altitude.

Oliverio Rincon, who won

the longest stage of this year's Giro d'Italia and took fifth place overall, and Alvaro Mejia are Colombia's top hopes.

Wednesday's time-trial will be held on an undulating route which runs from the town of Paipa to the provincial capital of Tunja, 42 kilometres away.

Sunday's road race will be staged on a circuit near the town of Duitama.

The first half of the world championships, the track events, finished Saturday in Bogota.

Mansell will not quit, to announce plans soon

LONDON (AP) — Nigel Mansell is considering a return to Formula One or Indy cars next season.

"Formula One is the pinnacle of motor sport and if I'm going to drive competitively again, I'd like to look at that formula before looking at anything else," Mansell said Monday.

"Anything is possible, and at the moment there is greater opportunity in America than there is in Formula One," he added.

"One thing is for sure ... We're not retiring."

Mansell maintained he's not too old at 41.

"Motor racing is a young man's sport and I still think I'm young enough to compete and win and go for another world championship," he said. "Whether I feel that and whether I'm given that opportunity to try and achieve that again

remains to be seen."

It's been a difficult couple of years for Mansell since he became the first driver to win the Formula One (1992) and Indy Car (1993) titles in consecutive years.

He failed in 1994 to win a single race on the U.S. Circuit driving for Newman-Haas. He returned to Europe at the end of the Formula One season for four races with his former Williams team, winning the final Grand Prix in Australia.

This season was a disaster.

When Williams declined to sign him — opting for the younger and much less expensive David Coulthard — Mansell joined McLaren Mercedes.

He was too big to fit in the new McLaren car — and a redesigned model with a bigger chassis didn't suit him. In May, he stopped the car on the 18th lap of the

Spanish Grand Prix and got out.

That was the end of Mansell's aborted season with McLaren and many assumed his career was over.

"As you can see, I'm quite slim and quite fit," Mansell joked at the launch of his autobiography "The People's Champion."

Mansell said he has declined offers with several lower-ranking Formula One teams. He admitted the top teams seemed to have their driving teams set for next season.

"If I just wanted to accept a drive I could have had five different drives since April," he said. "But I want to drive where I feel I can compete and win. And we all know in Formula One there are only two or three drives that really have a chance to win."

Mansell lamented not being teamed this year at

Williams with fellow Briton Damon Hill. He suggested that Michael Schumacher, who virtually clinched the championship with his victory Sunday in the European Grand Prix, would have had a more difficult time if he had been around.

"There's no question ... in a perfect world, hindsight being 20-20, I wish my contract had been taken by the Williams team this year. It would have been nice to partner Damon and I think the possibilities for the world championship could have been different," he said.

"Having said that, I think Michael has done an outstanding job this season. There's no question at the moment he's the class of the field," Mansell added.

Sheikh Mohammed dumps trainer who 'misled' him on condition of horse

LONDON (AFP) — Sheikh Mohammed, the nine-time champion owner, split from his successful partnership with trainer Henry Cecil Tuesday after claims he had been "misled" on a horse's fitness.

The break resulted from an unexplained injury to two-year-old Mark of Esteem who left Cecil's stable in September for Dubai.

It ended one of racing's most successful partnerships in the last decade.

Racing manager Anthony Stroud read a statement on behalf of Mohammed, explaining why he had removed his 40 horses from Cecil's stable.

Stroud said:

"A complete physical was carried out on Mark of Esteem which discovered that he had a knee condition that could require surgery."

This injury occurred during or after his race at

Goodwood. It is a degenerative condition of his knee resulting in acute soreness.

"Sheikh Mohammed was not informed about the problem and neither was Anthony Stroud until the day of the Royal Lodge Stakes when Henry Cecil admitted that Mark of Esteem had a knee problem, displaying stiffness to his gait."

"Sheikh Mohammed expressed considerable disappointment over this mat-

ter because the trainer had not kept him informed about all the facts relating to the colt and had misled him."

Cecil said:

"Obviously this is a knock but I feel that under these circumstances it is probably for the best as his first priority is Dubai and mine is my family, my staff, my other owners and, as ever, to win as many races as possible."

United boost profits despite traumatic season

LONDON (R) — Manchester United Tuesday reported annual profits almost doubled to £20 million (£31.7 million) despite a traumatic 1994-95 season in which the club failed to win a major trophy.

United increased profit before transfer fees and taxation by 42 per cent to £16.3 million (£25.8 million) and enjoyed net income on player transfers of £3.7 million (£5.9 million) in the year to July 31, 1995.

Remarkably, turnover from the club's successful merchandising division increased 65 per cent to a staggering £23.5 million (£37.3 million), outstripping gate receipts.

The strong overall performance came in a season when United missed out on the major prizes the pitch, finishing as runners-up in the Premier League and the F.A. Cup.

The club's reputation was also tarnished by Eric Cantona's notorious "kung-fu" attack on an abusive Crystal Palace fan, which earned the Frenchman an eight-month ban from the game.

United doubled their transfer fee reserve to £8 million (£12.7 million) and Chief Executive Martin Edwards said the club were ready to spend to strengthen their squad.

"If the team is not performing well later in the season then it may be that we will want to enter the mar-

ket," Edwards said.

"We really don't know whether we will have to use it (the reserve) but that's what it is there for," he added.

United fans have been upset by the recent sales of stars Paul Ince to Italy's Internazionale, Mark Hughes to Chelsea and Andrei Kanchelskis to Everton.

Edwards said revenue this year would be hit by rebuilding work on the north stand which has temporarily cut capacity at the Old Trafford Stadium.

Work is scheduled for completion next May and will enable Old Trafford to house 55,000 spectators.

The capacity was 44,000 in 1994-95 when ticket and programme sales rose 10 per cent to £19.6 million (£31.1 million).

Edwards said that United's first round elimination from the UEFA Cup last week at the hands of Russia's Rotor Volgograd should not have a great impact financially.

"We will obviously miss out on TV income. But we have never budgeted for cup success. Our major thrust must be to win a domestic competition," Edwards said.

Record team number for '98 World Cup

ZURICH, Switzerland (AP) — A record number of teams have submitted entries for the 1998 World Cup in France, the world governing body of soccer said Monday.

FIFA said more than 150 national associations had entered teams by Saturday's deadline, although the exact number was unclear because some entry forms had yet to be received.

The previous high was 144 in the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

"The record entry reflects not only the continuing emergence of new countries in various continents and the founding of new national associations," FIFA General Secretary Joseph Blatter said.

The preliminary draw for the 1998 World Cup is Dec. 12 in Paris.

FIFA considering world league for clubs

FIFA is considering a 16-club international summer league that could begin playing after the 1998 World Cup in France, Blatter said Monday.

In an interview with Germany's ARD television network, Blatter said the club league would be "like a small world championship for clubs" and would be played mainly in North America, Asia and Africa, where soccer is still in development stages and where the market is not oversaturated.

The league would be contested over 14 days during the summer months, Blatter said.

"We looked at the international calendar and we saw some interesting gaps in the summer months," he said.

Polish teams confused about which is home field for Olimpia

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — One of Poland's first-division soccer teams could face exclusion from the league if it again fails to show up for a game at home, a soccer union spokesman said on Monday.

However, Olimpia-Lechia, formed earlier this year by the first-division Olimpia Poznan and the third-division Lechia Gdansk, is ready to play at what it considers its home field in Gdansk.

Most teams show up in Gdansk without complaints,

but some travel to the western city of Poznan, about 250 kilometers southwest of Gdansk, where Olimpia's old field is under renovation.

Olimpia-Lechia has already lost one game by default and faces another such decision for not playing against Lech Poznan on Sunday.

"They will be punished again," Andrzej Karczewski, spokesman for the Polish Soccer Union, told the Associated Press.

He said a ruling will be made early next week.

Karczewski said under Polish league regulations, a team losing three times by default gets excluded from the competition.

The spokesman said Olimpia's and Lechia's merger so far has failed to win approval of soccer authorities and thus the team should treat its old field as its home.

Maradona is happy

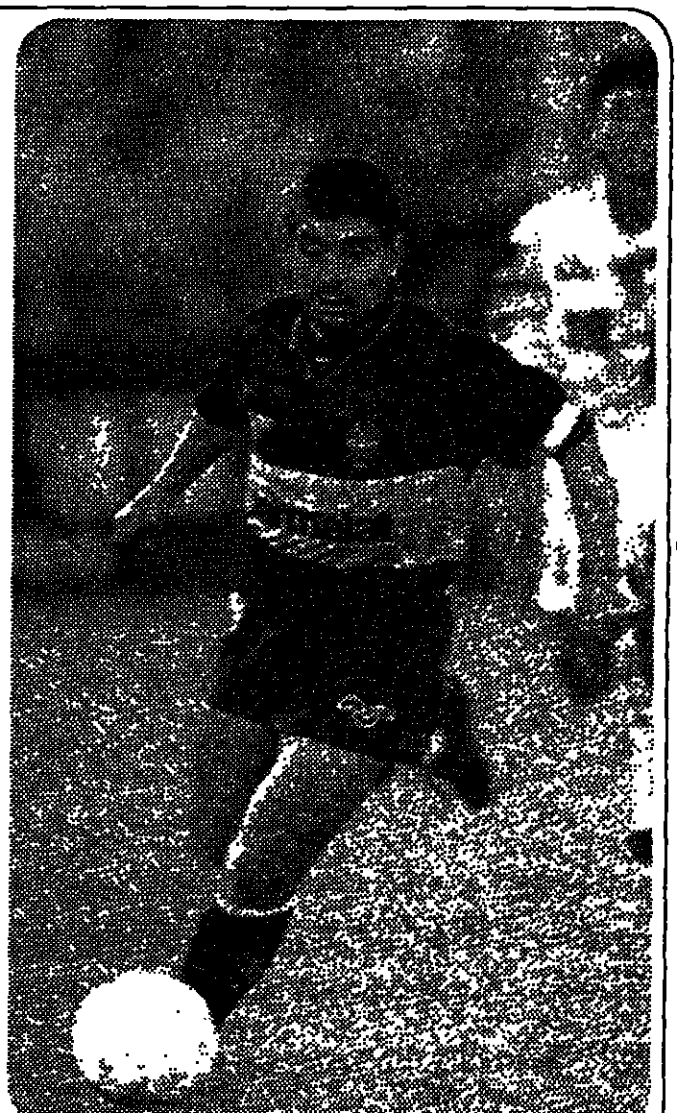
BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Diego Maradona has declared himself "satisfied and happy" with his footballing comeback, on his return from Boca Juniors' exhibition match against South Korea.

Boca won Saturday's game in Seoul 2-1 with Maradona, whose corner set up his team's first goal, showing that his skills had not deserted him after a 15-month drugs ban.

"Boca's main objective is the championship," he said at Ezeiza airport on Monday evening. "And we must be well-prepared and more together than everyone else if we're going to win it."

Maradona said that playing again "was marvellous. I was hoping I'd be able to handle all the running around and I succeeded. I never thought I'd feel so comfortable with the ball as I did."

The Argentine was banned by FIFA after testing positive for the stimulant ephedrine at last year's World Cup.



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Taiwan authorities to rule on Magic Johnson

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's health authorities are deciding whether to allow basketball star Earvin "Magic" Johnson onto the island.

Johnson retired in 1991 after contracting HIV, the virus which causes AIDS, although he later returned to basketball.

The American has been invited by an insurance company in Taiwan to take part in two special games at the end of the month.

But Taiwan has a law requiring HIV-positive foreigners to leave the country.

"We are studying very carefully Magic Johnson's case from the basis of related regulations," an official at the cabinet's department of health said by telephone.

"So far, we have not made any decision," he added.

After his retirement in 1991, Johnson returned to

play in the 1992 NBA All-Star game and the 1992 Barcelona Olympics as a member of the U.S. "Dream Team" which won the gold medal.

Johnson, now 36, announced his intention to return to the NBA prior to the 1992-93 season but changed his mind when several prominent players expressed reservations about sharing the court with an HIV-positive player.

In July this year, Johnson was reported to be considering making a comeback with the Los Angeles Lakers, who he led to five NBA championships. Johnson is the team's vice-president and part owner.

But two weeks later he said he had realised his future was "in business and not playing in the NBA."

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Rob Roy		While You Were Sleeping		CONCORD "2" POLICE ACADEMY "MISSION TO MOSCOW" Shows: 4, 6, 8, 10	Hi Citizen daily at 8:30 p.m. Written & directed by Mohammad Shawaqfeh		Presents "Peace Oh Peace" In English every Saturday Show starts at 8:30 p.m. For reservation call 625155
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30					

France on defensive, aims for discretion in Tahiti

Combined Agency dispatches

FRANCE, fighting continued local and global condemnation of its latest nuclear test, was trying to stay discreet in its South Pacific territory on Tuesday to avoid fresh violence, officials said.

"In order not to put oil on the fire we want to remain very discreet," the chief of gendarme forces, Colonel Jean-Jacques Plande, told Reuters in Tahiti's capital.

As Papeete awoke to its normal gridlock traffic, the city was calm, but gendarmes, in their distinctive blue trucks and cars, cruised the streets. Over 800 gendarmes are deployed in the capital, most of them staying in hotels around town.

A Molotov cocktail was thrown at a courthouse in the city on Sunday Tahiti time, but no one was hurt (Tahiti is behind the international dateline).

The firebomb was a sign that protests may take the form of terrorism instead of street riots.

A youth speeding by on a motorbike threw the Molotov cocktail at the door of the courthouse hours after France detonated a nuclear blast measured at about 100 kilotonnes at Fangataufa atoll.

France tripled its contingent of riot police in Tahiti to more than 720 in the days before its second nuclear test. Along with regular police, more than 1,000 officers are on duty in Papeete alone.

This show of force has deterred a repeat of anti-

nuclear and pro-independence demonstrations that spiralled into riots, looting and arson after the first nuclear blast on Mururoa atoll on Sept. 5.

The riots left part of the international airport terminal burned out, and dozens of downtown shops and buildings were looted and burned. More than 200 people were jailed.

Some police were stripped of their weapons during the riot, leading to concern that renewed violence could take the form of sniping or other forms of urban terrorism.

At the United Nations in New York, France again struck a defiant note, describing the arguments used to condemn its disputed testing programme as "unfounded, unfair and mean."

It said the South Pacific Forum's decision to suspend France as a dialogue partner was "particularly unpleasant."

In announcing the forum's decision to the U.N. General Assembly, the grouping's chair, Papua New Guinea, said France had shown total disregard for regional opposition to its test series, the first since Paris declared a moratorium in 1992.

"I am absolutely dismayed at France's continuing disregard of the South Pacific Forum and the international community's outrage at the French government's arrogance in detonating yet another nuclear bomb," Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister Julius Chan said in a statement issued after his

U.N. address.

He also commented on the possibility of the forum's member states breaking bilateral ties with Paris. So far only the tiny island nations of Nauru and Kiribati have suspended relations.

"I can sense that individual countries will begin to view the bilateral relations with France and that will have an effect on trade and other areas of cooperation with France," Mr. Chan told Australian Radio.

But Australia, one of the region's fiercest critics of French testing, immediately rejected suggestions that Canberra suspend ties with Paris.

"Engagement is the answer," Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating told reporters in the southern city of Adelaide.

Regional analysts said France's influence as a major aid donor to the region meant it was unlikely many small island nations would follow the example of Nauru and Kiribati.

Japan, one of the region's two biggest aid donors along with Australia, said on Tuesday it would send a special envoy to the United Nations next week to seek more support for a proposed resolution calling for an immediate halt to nuclear testing.

Yoshio Hatano, a former Japanese ambassador to the world body, will travel to New York on Sunday to start rallying support among delegates from other countries, a foreign ministry spokesman said in Tokyo.



ASSASSINATION BID: The shattered remains of the car of Macedonian President Gligorov after a bomb exploded in central Skopje on Tuesday, killing the driver and wounding the president in an assassination attempt which coincided with his government's moves to mend fences with neighbouring Serbia and Greece (see page one) (AFP photo)

'Joint projects needed to cement M.E. peace'

LIMASSOL (AP) — The Middle East peace process will be consolidated only after Arabs and Israelis conclude joint development projects, speakers from both sides said during an energy conference Tuesday.

Former Jordanian Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber said it was imperative to close the huge disparity in per capita income between Israelis and Palestinians.

He said an Israeli's annual income averaged \$14,000 a year, a Palestinian's a scant \$1,000.

As foreign minister, Dr. Abu Jaber headed a joint Jordanian-Palestinian team to the Arab-Israeli peace talks when they began in Madrid in October 1991.

"Four years later, the region is still not at peace, leaving much room for pessimism," he cautioned.

"Israel has to take a quantum leap into redefining its security, not in military terms alone, and thus must understand that for the peace to be durable, it has to be both honorable and comprehensive," he added.

Dr. Abu Jaber called on the United States, Japan and the European Union (EU) states to support the process

through economic assistance.

He said that "for decades the carrot of peace dangled promising development and investment designed to right the conflict-caused economic disparities."

"It is only through a massive and serious effort that the region can extricate itself from the terribly strong web of under-development in which it has been caught."

"The prospects depend not only on local and regional factors but on offshore effort as well ... yet no Marshall-like plan seems to be in the offing," he said.

The conference, organised by the Cyprus-based Arab Press Service (APS), is debating Middle East energy strategy to the year 2008.

"Real peace will come only after we conclude such joint projects as oil pipelines and energy networks linking all the states in the region," APS Chairman Pierre Shammam told the 80 senior oil executives from 30 countries attending the annual conference.

Amos Ron, former director-general of Israel's energy ministry, said that Israel was proceeding with

(Continued on page 7)

Algerian newspaper editor gunned down

PARIS (Agencies) — The editor of Algeria's main Arabic language newspaper was shot dead on Tuesday morning in central Algiers, an Algerian official statement said.

Omar Ouattalan, 36-year-old editor of the Arabic daily Al Khabar, was shot in Algiers near a press complex housing several newspaper offices, including Al Khabar, said the statement carried by the Algerian news agency APS.

This is the third murder of a newspaper editor in Algeria's four years of civil strife pitting guerrillas against government forces, previous victims included the editors of the Al Mujahid and LF Matin newspapers.

According to a colleague of Ouattalan's gunned down when he was leaving his home in the belcourt suburb of Algiers.

The official statement did not say who had killed Ouattalan, the fifth journalist shot dead over the last month.

The authorities have blamed militants for the murder of about 50 journalists and media workers since June 1993 when guerrillas threatened reporters with

death for their alleged siding with the army-backed government side.

Most of Algeria's editors live in a heavily-guarded compound near Algiers. Several journalists have been gunned down while leaving it to visit parents or children.

Algeria's main newspapers, including Al Khabar, staged a three-day strike last month to protest against the "systematic slaughter" of journalists.

Seven Algeria militants were convicted by a Belgian court on Tuesday of planning guerrilla attacks but their presumed leader, Ahmad Zaoui, and four others were acquitted.

Mr. Zaoui and his co-accused, all alleged members of Algeria's fundamentalist Armed Islamic Group (GIA), had been charged with offences ranging from forming a gang, possession of arms and explosives, forgery and receiving stolen goods.

In acquitting Mr. Zaoui, a former Algerian university professor, court president Claire de Gryse said in her 45-minute ruling that in the absence of clear material proof there was a doubt about this guilt.

COLUMN

Industrialist pledges \$100 m to fight cancer

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)

— An industrialist who has been battling cancer has announced that his family will donate a record \$100 million to research the disease. The gift by Jon M. Huntsman Sr. and his family is the largest financial contribution ever to medical research and the second-largest cash gift in the history of American higher education, according to the Almanac of Higher Education. Pledges gathered by Mr. Huntsman will add an additional \$51 million to the total. Huntsman said Monday morning that he was unaware until last week how his donation ranks. "We weren't trying to break any records or establish any goal. We were just trying to do our part," said Mr. Huntsman, who oversees a worldwide petrochemical conglomerate bearing his name, based in Salt Lake City. The money will go to researchers at the University of Utah's Huntsman Cancer Institute, established in 1993 with a \$20 million pledge from the Huntsman family. Even before that, the university had about 250 scientists working on grants from the National Cancer Institute. The Huntsmans had hoped to build on their original pledge by raising \$100 million. They didn't make that goal, but did manage to secure \$51 million in pledges from outside sources, including \$15 million from the British pharmaceutical giant Glaxo-Wellcome, part of which goes to Duke University in North Carolina.

Kirov Ballet director, choreographer arrested for bribes

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (AP)

— The director and the chief choreographer of the world-famous Kirov Ballet have been arrested for allegedly taking bribes totalling millions of dollars, officials said. Anatoly Malkov, the director of the 212-year old theatre, was arrested in his offices Friday while accepting a \$10,000 bribe from a Canadian impresario for the right to organise the company's foreign tour. The businessman had tipped the police, which marked the money intended for the bribe, said an official with St. Petersburg prosecutor's office, who asked not to be identified. Police found \$150,000 in cash during the search in Mr. Malkov's office, and called an audit in the theatre. Russia's Independent Television showed neat stacks of bank-wrapped \$100 bills piled on Mr. Malkov's table. Oleg Vinogradov, the ballet's chief choreographer for the last 18 years, was also arrested over the weekend. The case appeared to be one of the most scandalous instances of bribery in recent years, although corruption has become rampant after the Soviet collapse, fuelled by the economic chaos, backward legislation and police weakness.

Robbers loot 500 train passengers in Bangladesh

DHAKA (AP)

— About 35 armed robbers halted a train by placing tree logs on the track, then looted all the 500 passengers, police said Tuesday. Twelve passengers aboard the Purab Express who resisted the robbers were injured. The robbery occurred Monday night as the 12-car train was reaching Dhaka from the southeastern port city of Chittagong. After stopping the train at Arikhola village, 48 kilometres east of Dhaka, the robbers broke open the train doors and looted the passengers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Settlers run down Palestinian woman in Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Israeli settlers in a car knocked down a 60-year-old Palestinian woman in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron on Tuesday, Arab sources said. Fatima Jaradat, 60, was taken to hospital with a broken leg. She said the settlers, who drove off, ran her down on purpose.

Metro train crash in Cairo, 14 injured

CAIRO (AP) — Two trains crashed Tuesday at a suburban Cairo station, injuring 14 people, including an eight-year-old boy. A metro train approaching from the Helwan terminal, 30 kilometres south of Cairo, crashed into a standing train at Torah station, halfway from the city, police said. The driver of the incoming train and 13 passengers were hurt, the official Middle East News Agency said. The driver was seriously injured, and the legs of an eight-year-old boy, Ayman Fahmy Mohammad, were severed in the crash, the agency said. Police put the number of injured at six — all in the standing train — and said they were only slightly hurt. The report did not say how many passengers were in each train. The Cairo-Helwan metro line was closed after the crash.

'Iraqi caught trying to sneak into Kuwait'

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The Kuwaiti authorities arrested an Iraqi soldier caught trying to infiltrate the emirate after deserting. Al Anba newspaper reported Tuesday. The soldier, still in uniform, was spotted in the border region of the Um Naqra by a Kuwaiti patrol, the newspaper said without giving a date for his arrest. During interrogation the soldier said Baghdad was massing troops in the Zubair region just over the border to suppress growing opposition in the Shiite-majority south of Iraq. The Kuwaiti Defence Ministry refused to comment on the report. Kuwaiti authorities and newspapers have regularly announced the arrests of Iraqi infiltrators since Kuwait was liberated from Iraqi occupation in the 1991 Gulf war.

Liberal reelected Tunisian parliament speaker

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia's parliament on Tuesday reelected Habib Boulares, a liberal figure in Tunisian politics, as its speaker. Mr. Boulares, 61, is a politician member of the ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD), which holds 144 of the 163 seats of the chamber of deputies. A woman, Chedila Boukhchina, was elected deputy speaker, replacing another woman, Saidia Kefi. Mohammad Hedi Khelil was also reelected deputy speaker.

12 jailed for illegal fishing in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AP) — Eleven Pakistanis and a Palestinian have been convicted of illegal fishing in Somali waters and sentenced to five years each in prison, a radio station reported Tuesday. The station, which supports General Mohammad Farah Aided, one of Somalia's three self-proclaimed presidents, said the 12 were tried in a civilian court established by the warlord's alleged government in south Mogadishu. The proceedings were not open to the press or public. The 12 were captured in late February just off the Somali coast in the Indian Ocean about 30 kilometres south of Mogadishu. Their refrigerated boat was impounded. Some Western diplomats contend that Gen. Aided's militiamen captured and detained the Pakistanis in an attempt to force the government in Islamabad to recognise Gen. Aided's pretensions to the presidency.

Iraq urges Egypt to give medical help

CAIRO (AP) — In a sign of deteriorating health conditions, Iraq appealed to Egypt on Tuesday to provide it with medicine to help combat chronic illnesses and malnutrition. The Iraqi health minister, Omed Medhat, complained that millions of Iraqis lack adequate medicine for chronic illnesses like heart disease, Iraqi diplomats in Cairo said. Children and the elderly are increasingly suffering from malnutrition after five years of crushing U.N. sanctions, the diplomats said. Dr. Medhat, who was in Cairo for a gathering of Arab health ministers, appealed to his Egyptian counterpart, Ali Abdul Fatah, to provide Iraq with medicines — either for free or on credit. It was not clear whether Egypt responded, the diplomats said. Before the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq used to import from Egypt \$400 million worth of pharmaceuticals a year, meeting about 60 per cent of its needs. Iraq's health care system — financed by oil revenue — was considered one of the best in the Arab World.



Prince Charles

Charles for no barriers between Muslims and West

MUSCAT (R) — Britain's Prince Charles on Tuesday called for the breaking of barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding between the people in the Muslim and Western worlds.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the opening of an exhibition about Muslims in Britain, the prince said it was his view that the contribution "which Muslims make to British life and prosperity is still not sufficiently widely understood."

He said he believed that "by breaking down the barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding between people in the Muslim and Western worlds, we can find a means of avoiding ... the hostilities which have at times bedevilled relations between our two societies over centuries."

But he noted this was not an easy task "when the Western world is increasingly secular in its outlook and when there is a tendency to worship the God of technology."

He said that "in this regard we can learn from the world of Islam, as in the past, and perhaps discover how to restore a sense of the sacred in our lives."

The heir to the British throne said that "in the search for what is called 'sustainable development,' it is only a sense of the sacred which can provide the wisdom needed to limit the potential dangers of human ambition and arrogance."

Prince Charles later left for the city of Salalah for talks with Sultan Qaboos on the second day of a six-day visit to the country, an Omani official said.

He was due to watch a demonstration by the Omani armed forces followed by a banquet hosted by the Sultan, who attended Britain's Sandhurst Military Academy.

Sudan has highest number of AIDS cases in Arab World

CAIRO (AFP) — Sudan has the highest number of AIDS sufferers in the Arab World, where the total number of registered cases has risen by 12 per cent, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Tuesday.

There are 1,090 cases of the disease registered in Sudan and 649 in Djibouti, a WHO report said, pointing to close links between AIDS and tuberculosis in both countries.

The third worst-affected

country was Morocco with 249 cases, followed by Tunisia, Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The WHO report said a total of 3,043 cases of AIDS were registered in the 22 countries of the East Mediterranean region, which includes all Arab countries except Algeria and Mauritania, as well as Iran, Cyprus and Pakistan.

But the real figure of sufferers is likely to be "three or

four times higher, between 9,000 and 12,000 cases," because of the absence of systematic registration systems, the report said.

The number of cases was an increase of 12 per cent in 1994, showing that the disease is increasingly transmitted sexually.

Another 150,000 people are registered as HIV-positive in the East Mediterranean, the WHO report said.

It said that AIDS was still

Gamaa threatens violence against Americans over bomb plot verdict

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's largest militant group threatened Americans Tuesday with "all means of violence" in retaliation for the conviction of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman.

The warning came in pamphlets sent to security authorities and posted on walls in at least two southern Egyptian provinces, police said. It was the first statement by Gamaa Al Islamiyah, or the Islamic Group, since the conviction in New York Sunday.

"We warn you (Americans) with the use of all means of violence," a police source said, quoting the pamphlet.

The U.S. embassy in Cairo had no immediate comment, but said it was to issue a statement to U.S. expatriates later. About 11,500 Americans live in Egypt, the embassy said.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman and nine others were convicted on Sunday of conspiring to bomb the United Nations, tunnels and a bridge to frighten the United States into changing its Middle East policies.

The Islamic Group, many of whose followers consider Sheikh Abdul Rahman their spiritual leader, is Egypt's largest militant group and has carried out hit-and-run attacks since 1992, mainly in impoverished southern Egypt. More than 830 people — most of them militants and police — have died in the clashes.

Eight foreign tourists have

been killed in attacks blamed on the Islamic Group since 1992. None were Americans.

The police sources in Assiut and Qena provinces said the threats were specifically directed at American tourists. Both provinces are rich in pharaonic antiquities, although they attract fewer visitors than the famed ruins of Luxor and Aswan.

Assiut and Qena — as well as neighbouring Minya province — are traditional strongholds of the Islamic Group.

A lawyer who defends Egyptian militants told an Arabic newspaper Tuesday that Sheikh Abdul Rahman's conviction was part of "an American plot against Islam and the Islamic leaders."

"I am afraid that this decision will increase the spirit of hostility against Americans everywhere," Montasser Al Zayat told the London-based Al Hayat newspaper.

Other Muslim activists similarly condemned the trial.

The president of the Sudanese Bar Association called the conviction a U.S. plot to brand Islam with terrorism.

Fathi Khalil, who is also secretary-general of the government's human rights advisory council, told Sudan's Akhbar Al Yom newspaper Tuesday that the ruling "implies a prearranged agreement between the prosecution and certain American circles."

Security was tightened at

the sprawling U.S. embassy — which takes up about a city block — and other American institutions.

In his first interview since he was convicted, Sheikh Abdul Rahman said Monday the government was trying "to break my spirit" by moving him from New York.

The Sheikh was moved at 5:30 a.m. Monday from the Metropolitan Correctional Centre in Manhattan to the U.S. Medical Centre for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri.

In a telephone interview from the medical centre, the 57-year-old cleric said he was denied a fair trial and now the government was trying to separate him from his lawyers, purportedly because of his health.

"Well they make me sicker. They make me sicker," Sheikh Abdul Rahman said as he sat Monday night in a cell isolated from other inmates. Coughing occasionally, he spoke to the Associated Press in a three-way call with a translator.

He complained that he was strip-searched when he arrived at the medical centre and was not given any better medical care than before.

"They show your private parts to everyone. I told them, 'no I can't do that.' They said, 'this is the law, you have to do it.' I said, 'well, this is the American law that humiliates a human being,'" Sheikh Abdul Rahman said.

The Sheikh said it was clear

the government did not want him to be able to work on his case with his lawyers.

"This is part of a government planning for hardship against me and trying to break my spirit," he said.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman said he was denied a fair trial by a judge who refused to allow jurors to be questioned adequately to weed out their biases about Muslims or Arabs.

He said he has plenty of grounds to appeal, including the fact that the judge did not tell defence lawyers that the alleged mastermind of the multiple plots — Siddiq Ibrahim Siddiq Ali — was talking to the government before opening statements.

Just days into the trial, Mr. Siddiq Ali pleaded guilty in a cooperation deal.

Mr. Siddiq Ali was allegedly the architect of plans to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and to bomb the New York landmarks in a 10-minute span.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman also said the judge refused to allow the defence to get a State Department document that would prove the United States arrested him at the request of the Egyptian government.

"I am jailed for my political beliefs and my religious beliefs. Despite that, there is not a shred of evidence that I am a conspirator," he said and with that comment, his phone connection was cut off.